To Theodora

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

John of Tella's *Profession of Faith* has long been known: William Wright already described the text in his *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* in 1871. Scholars have noted its existence soon afterwards, but no effort has been made to publish it – probably because in comparison to his well known contemporaries Severus of Antioch, Jacob of Sarug and Philoxenus of Mabbug, John had not been regarded important enough. Menze encountered this text while working on his Princeton PhD thesis (now published as *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008) in which John of Tella plays a key role. Luckily, Emmanuel Papoutsakis was interested to read parts of the text with Akalın and Menze in his Syriac Class at the Near Eastern Department of Princeton University in 2002/3. Menze edited the text and made a first translation using parts of it for his PhD. However, without a grant from the "Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft" (DFG) for Kutlu Akalın no further progress would have been made towards a publication. With the grant Akalın reedited the text and presents here a new, publishable translation; Menze supplies the historical analysis. Besides Emmanuel Papoutsakis and the DFG the authors would like to thank George Kiraz for his immediate interest in publishing the text in the "Texts of Christian Late Antiquity" (TeCLA) Series, Katie Stott at Gorgias Press for her assistance with the editing process, and Pamela Bonnekoh, Christine Mühlenkamp, Mor Polycarpus, Dan Schwartz, and Johannes Hahn who patiently discussed textual, theological and historical problems with them.

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INTRODUCTION

Only a few scholars came across John of Tella's *Profession of Faith* since it was first described by William Wright, and hardly any made use of it. In his edition and Dutch translation of John's biography by Elias, Hendrik Kleyn listed John's surviving works which were known to him in 1887, and tersely passed judgement on the *Profession of Faith*: "Deze geloofsbelijdenis verschilt op geen belangrijk punt van dergelijke geschriften van anderen" ("This confession of faith differs in no important matter from similar texts by other authors").[1] However, Kleyn makes no remarks on the content. In contrast, in his *The Separation of the Monophysites* from 1923, William Wigram at least presents a few introductory notes.[2] Otherwise, scholars have only referred to it, mainly in the handbooks of Syrian literature, but also Arthur Vööbus noted it in his *History of Asceticism*.[3] Recently Menze has introduced a couple of passages in translation in his *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*.[4]

John's *Profession of Faith* is only one of many Syriac texts that are still in need of a thorough analysis, not to mention publication. Church historians and historians of Dogma have studied Augustine and other Latin or Greek authors for centuries, and thereby established a history of doctrine, liturgy,

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[1] Hendrik Gerrit Kleyn, *Het Leven van Johannes van Tella door Elias*, Leiden: E. J. Brill 1882, XI.

[2] William Ainger Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites*, London: The Faith Press 1923, 103. See also below "Conclusion: A Bishop's Spiritual Legacy".

[3] William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literatur*, London: Adam and Charles Black 1894, 82f; Rubens Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*, Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre 1907, 359; Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*, Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers 1922, 82f; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*, Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum 1965, 163; Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient. A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*, Vol. 3, Louvain: Peeters 1988, 198; see also Volker Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile," *OrChr* 90 (2006), 51.

[4] Volker Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, 89-92, 106.

ecclesiology and sacraments for European Christendom. Similar studies for the Near Eastern Churches are still a desideratum. Some groundwork for important authors like Philoxenus of Mabbug, Severus of Antioch or John of Ephesus has been done, but much is wanting. This short book cannot offer a substitute for more thorough studies on, for example, canons, rules, letters etc. that are to be found in the *Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*. Also the different heresiologies and documents on faith by the non-Chalcedonians need further investigation concerning content, audience and context. Therefore the discussions and conclusions presented here are in a way only preliminary, and it is hoped that scholars will wish to re-evaluate them further after a more thorough groundwork has been laid.[5]

[5] Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome*, Leiden: Brill 2008 appeared too late to be considered here. The chapter on "The Elaboration of the Roman Primacy" would have enriched greatly the discussion of papal primacy in the chapter "John of Tella, the Apostle Paul, and the Foundation of the Church".

THE AFTERMATH OF THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451)

In the time of the emperor Justinian I (527–565[1]) the later so-called Syrian Orthodox Church split from the church of the empire, and established an underground rival church against the ruling (Chalcedonian) church. The historical background for the split under Justinian lies in the (ecclesiastical) developments in the eastern Roman Empire during the fifth century, especially after the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Whereas the fourth century had been occupied with the Trinitarian question, Christological concerns became the question of the day in the fifth century: how should Christians understand Christ's incarnation? How could the true God become flesh born of the Virgin Mary? Pope Leo (440–461) was a staunch defender of a two nature Christology (dyophysitism), in other words, the pope regarded Christ as being *in* two distinct natures, divine and human, also after the incarnation. He presented his Christology in one of his letters, the (in)famous *Tome*, which he had already sent to Constantinople two years before the Council of Chalcedon in order to lay out the papacy's understanding of Christ. In the end, the Council of Chalcedon opted for this dyophysite Christology, and in the following century until the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, Leo's *Tome* became a cornerstone of orthodoxy for (western) Chalcedonians.

However, many Christians especially in the Near Eastern provinces of the empire rejected the formula of faith established by Chalcedon. Almost all of Egypt and parts of Palestine and Syria considered the Chalcedonian Christological formula as innovation, and accused the Chalcedonians ("dyophysites"), e.g., the supporters of the council, of dividing Christ into two persons, and therefore worshipping a quaternity (Father, two sons, and Holy Spirit) instead of the Holy Trinity.[2] The opponents of Chalcedon slanderously called the Chalcedonians "Nestorians" after the former patri-

[1] Years in brackets after a name indicate in cases of emperors and bishops their tenure, for other persons the years of their birth and death.

[2] For example also John of Tella did so in his *Profession of Faith*; see below "Conclusion: A Bishop's Spiritual Legacy".

arch of Constantinople Nestorius (428–431), whom the ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431), under the leadership of Cyril of Alexandria (412–444), had condemned as a heretic.[3] Both, non-Chalcedonians (also called "miaphysites") as well as eastern Chalcedonians regarded themselves as true heirs of Cyril, who had been one of most influential theologians of his time, not to mention also an omnipotent patriarch.[4]

The result of this division was an ecclesiastical turmoil in the second half of the fifth century. According to the church historian Evagrius Scholasticus

> all the churches were divided into distinct parties, and their prelates had no communion with one another. Consequently it came about that there were many divisions both in the East and in the western regions and in Libya, since the Eastern bishops were not on terms with those in the West or in Libya, nor in turn were the latter with those in the East. The situation became more absurd. For the prelates of the East were not even in communion with each other, nor indeed were those directing the sees of Europe or Libya, and much less so with outsiders.[5]

Although Evagrius undoubtedly exaggerates the situation to a certain extent, the debate over Chalcedon turned the Church in the East into deep agony (whereas the West quite unanimously adhered to Pope Leo's dyophysite Christology): the emperors could not oversee a united church of the empire, but had to deal with different factions who all claimed to hold on strictly to the apostolic faith. These rifts between the West and the different groups in the East caused an ecclesiastical crisis that reached its peek in the sixth century under the emperors Justin I (518–527) and his nephew Justinian I (527–565).

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[3] Two opposing parties met at Ephesus in 431, but the meeting convened by Cyril was later regarded as "orthodox" and "ecumenical" by the church of the empire. For the controversy and its aftermath see Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy. The Making of a Saint and of a Heretic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004.

[4] The term "monophysites" (for "miaphysites") should be avoided; see Dietmar W. Winkler, "Miaphysitism: A new Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology", *The Harp* 10 (1997), 33–40.

[5] Evagrius, *Church History* III.30; *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, London: Methuen 1898 [reprint Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert 1964], 126 (*The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, trans. Michael Whitby, TTH 33, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2000, 167).

In 482 the papacy in Rome broke off communion with Constantinople because the pope judged the capital's patriarch, Acacius, as heretical for being in communion with Peter Mongus, the non-Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria.[6] This schism between Rome and Constantinople lasted until the accession of Justin I who ended the doctrinal confusion of the church of the empire in 519. He forced the patriarch of Constantinople to accept a union with the pope in Rome, and implemented a strict Chalcedonian policy in the eastern provinces. A cornerstone of this imperial enforcement was a *libellus* by Pope Hormisdas (514–523) which every bishop had to sign and send back to Rome, stating that the signatory declared his submission under the authority and faith of Rome. In the *libellus*, Hormisdas claims that Rome has kept the orthodox faith immaculate since the time of the apostles whereas all other patriarchal sees in the East (Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople; Jerusalem does not play a role) went astray at some point in the past. Not surprisingly this again started a heated controversy in the East, among non-Chalcedonians as well as Chalcedonians, since not all Chalcedonians agreed with either the papal perception of the past or the papal policy of recent decades. The eastern Chalcedonians remembered very well that the papacy had condemned their Chalcedonian patriarchs of Constantinople. Among eastern Chalcedonians this led to a discussion if the Council of Chalcedon needed to be modified,[7] whereas for the non-Chalcedonians it marks the beginning of their separation from the imperial church, and the establishment of their own ecclesiastical hierarchy. More than 50 non-Chalcedonian bishops refused to sign the papal *libellus* of submission and left their sees for exile.[8] One of them was John of Tella.

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[6] For a short overview of the Acacian schism see W.H.C. Frend, "Eastern Attitudes to Rome during the Acacian Schism", in *The Orthodox Churches and the West*, ed. by Derek Baker, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1976, 69-81.

[7] The so-called "Three Chapter Controversy" which questioned the orthodoxy (of the writings) of three Chalcedonian theologians; see below "John's List of Heretics".

[8] For the *libellus* see Walter Haacke, *Die Glaubensformel des Papstes Hormisdas im Acacianischen Schisma*, Rome: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregorianae 1939; for the historical context see Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 58–94.

THE AUTHOR: JOHN OF TELLA

"John of Tella" is the most common name for John, bishop of Tella (519–521/2), but not the most complete. Whereas his two biographers Elias and John of Ephesus (who wrote about him in the 540s and 560s) simply call him "John of Tella", in many of John of Tella's own texts he is called "John bar Qursos, bishop of Tellā (d-Mawzlat)".[1] As the sources confirm that "John bar [Q](u)rsos" (*Chronicle of Zuqnin*, also called *Chronicle of Ps.-Dionysius*), "John bar Qurasos [*sic*], bishop of Tellā d-Mawzlat" (*Chronicon Anonymum ad A.D. 819 pertinens*) and "John of Tella" (Elias, *Life of John of Tella*) died February 6, 538, there can be no doubt that they all refer to the same John – "John of Tella."[2]

JOHN'S CAREER: FROM MONK TO BISHOP

John of Tella (482/3–538, bishop 519–521/2) is a person whose name does not appear in handbooks on the early or late antique church – a fact that does not do justice to John's role in establishing the first independent non-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical hierarchy as Theresia Hainthaler pointed out recently.[3] John was born in Callinicum in the province of Osrhoene in 482/3. He received a good education, but instead of pursuing a secular career, he joined the monastic community of Mār Zakkai near Callinicum

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[1] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, first edited (with Dutch translation) by Kleyn, *Het leven van Johannes van Tella door Elias*; re-edited (with Latin translation) using an additional manuscript from Berlin by Ernest W. Brooks, in *Vitae virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum*, CSCO 7–8, Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae 1907, 31–95 (23–60). English translation by Josef R. Ghanem, *The Biography of John of Tella (d. A.D. 537) by Elias*, unpubl. PhD Diss. Madison/WI 1970. John of Ephesus wrote the biography of John of Tella as part of his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 18, ed. and trans. by Ernest W. Brooks, Paris: Firmin-Didot 1924, 513–526.

[2] For the sources and discussion see Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile," 46–48.

[3] Alois Grillmeier – Theresia Hainthaler, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Vol. II/3. *Die Kirchen von Jerusalem und Antiochien nach 451–600*, Freiburg: Herder 2002, 196.

around 507.[4] In 519 he was ordained bishop of Tella, today Viranşehir in south-eastern Turkey, a city whose name changed several times in antiquity. In the *Profession of Faith* it is called "Constantina".[5] John became bishop at a time when, according to his biographer Elias, "the persecution of the churches had not yet spread to the east of the Euphrates." [6] However, two years later John had to leave his see because he refused to accept the papal *libellus*.[7]

John spent several years of his exile in the patriarchate of Antioch, first in the monastery of Mār Zakkai, then in the "desert" in the region of Marde (today Mardin in south-eastern Turkey) before 525. Later he retreated several times to Persia, and in 532/3 he travelled to Constantinople.[8] In the time of his exile he laid the ground for the fame that led Elias and John of Ephesus to write *vitae* about "one of the greatest militants" for the non-Chalcedonian cause.[9] While (almost) no other non-Chalcedonian bishop dared to ordain priests and deacons for the non-Chalcedonian communities, it is said that John of Tella ordained 170,000 priests and deacons.[10] Although the number is exaggerated, there is no doubt that John of Tella was responsible for the establishment of a non-Chalcedonian underground ecclesiastical hierarchy which formed the first independent hierarchy of the

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[4] For the location of the monastery see below "John of Tella as Author".

[5] Only in the title and at the very end, both supplied by the scribe, the text speaks of "Tella". For further names of Tella see *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, ed. Richard Talbert, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000, Map 89 and Map-by-Map Directory vol. 2, 1270.

[6] See also Volker Menze, "Jacob of Sarug, John of Tella, and Paul of Edessa: Ecclesiastical Politics in Osrhoene 519-522", in George Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone. Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*, Piscataway: Gorgias Press 2008 (Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 3), 421–438.

[7] For the *libellus* see below "John of Tella, the Apostle Paul, and the Foundation of the Church".

[8] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 18, 515. Elias does not mention John's retreat to the monastery of Mār Zakkai. For John's travels see also below "The Date of John's *Profession of Faith*".

[9] I. Aphram I Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls. A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, Piscataway/NJ: Gorgias Press 2003, 274f [English translation of a study in Arabic from 1943].

[10] According to Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60f (Ghanem 71) John of Tella was assisted by a few other non-Chalcedonian bishops.

later so called Syrian Orthodox Church.[11] John did not just ordain priests to vacant parish churches but as many priests and deacons as possible and thereby infiltrated the Chalcedonian dioceses with thousands of dissident clerics. The emperor Justinian I (527–565) responded to this threat with a policy of rapprochement towards the non-Chalcedonians and summoned their bishops in 532/3 to Constantinople where John, together with other non-Chalcedonian bishops, participated in a discussion of faith with Chalcedonian bishops.[12] However, no agreement could be reached and John (and the other bishops) also boldly refused Justinian's request not to ordain anyone (or at least no Chalcedonians).[13]

They could do so because at the beginning of the 530s the position of the non-Chalcedonians in the East was quite strong – not the least because of John of Tella's undertakings. After the first waves of persecutions were over, the non-Chalcedonians managed to re-establish a non-Chalcedonian church life, and at least partially returned to the cities.[14]

Especially notable, however, is their spread beyond the Roman border, where some of them may have fled and established or renewed ties to

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[11] See Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 74–90, and idem, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 58, 146, 151–154, 184f.

[12] For this discussion of faith see Sebastian Brock, "The conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)", *OCP* 47 (1981), 87–121; Jakob Speigl, "Das Religionsgespräch mit den severianischen Bischöfen in Konstantinopel im Jahre 532", *AHC* 16 (1984), 264–285 and Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 58–67 and 94–101.

[13] *Textes Monophysites*, ed. and trans. François Nau, in *PO* 13, Paris: Firmin-Didot 1919, 193; Brock, "The conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)", 115 with n. 86. Justinian requested that the non-Chalcedonian bishops should restrict their sacerdotal tasks (including baptism and Eucharist) to their own party, but it seems difficult to fit in here the question of ordinations. If the emperor implied that non-Chalcedonian bishops could ordain non-Chalcedonians, he would allow them to transgress the jurisdiction of Chalcedonian bishops because all dioceses in the patriarchate of Antioch were officially Chalcedonian. It might be that Justinian actually had in mind a kind of compromise in order to at least slow down the mass ordinations conducted by John of Tella – and the emperor's statement would prove John's great success to recruit able candidates for priesthood also among Chalcedonians; see Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 80–89.

[14] Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 185–193.

Christian communities there. John wrote on matters of faith to the Lakhmid king Mundir III (d. 554), warning him of the Julianist heresy.[15] Whereas the Ghassanids were Constantinople's loyal Arab vassal, the Lakhmid kings sided with Rome's old enemy, the Sasanian dynasty in Persia. John's correspondence with Mundir is lost, but John might have attempted (unsuccessfully) to convert this alley of the Sasanians to non-Chalcedonianism – as already before him Philoxenus of Mabbug (485–521) and Severus of Antioch (512–518) had written on that matter to Lakhmid rulers. Furthermore, John's *vita* by Elias as well as parts of John's own works show that he not only travelled to Persia several times, but had converted there "many thousands of people […] to the knowledge of the truth", probably established good relationships with non-Chalcedonian communities in Persia, and even fulfilled their requests to ordain bishops.[16] Like his non-Chalcedonian colleague Simeon of Beth Aršam, the so called "Persian debater", John thereby intruded the jurisdiction of the Church of the East in Persia and attempted to spread the non-Chalcedonian faith.[17] Besides ordaining bishops, he debated questions concerning pastoral care with his colleagues beyond the border. Twice he mentions Mār Abbas of Beth Qaddišā in his *Questions and Answers* who advised him about what to do with altars from heretics and heretical Eucharistic elements.[18] The way he introduces Mār Abbas in his *Questions and Answers* makes it very likely that the person was a bishop, certainly a non-Chalcedonian, who was from

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[15] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 63 (Ghanem, 73). For Mundir see Irfan Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* I.2, Washington/DC 1995, 706–709 and 722–729. For Julian of Halicarnassus and the Julianists see below "John's Christology" and "Date of John's *Profession of Faith*".

[16] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 35f, 60–62 (Ghanem, 45, 70–72).

[17] For Simeon of Beth Aršam see John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 17, 137–158 and Simeon's *Letter on Barsauma, the Bishop of Nisibis, and the Heresy of the Nestorians*, in Josephus Simonius Assemanus, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana* Vol. 1, Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide 1719 [reprint: Hildesheim: Georg Olms 1975], 346–358; see also Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis. John of Ephesus and* The Lives of the Eastern Saints, Berkeley: University of California Press 1990, 97–100; Joel Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh. Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2006, 175–177 and Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom. The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2006, 47–51.

[18] See below: "John of Tella as Author".

Persia and maybe even ordained by John himself.[19] Like Simeon, John deliberately strengthened the non-Chalcedonian church foundation beyond the border in Persia and towards Arabia – links that were taken up since the 540s by the non-Chalcedonian bishops Jacob Baradaeus (542–578) and Theodore of Arabia.[20]

Overall, the undertakings of John and other non-Chalcedonian bishops in Persia and Arabia presented both a threat and an opportunity for the emperor in Constantinople. A threat because they opposed the doctrine of the empire, but an opportunity if Justinian could win over or reintegrate the non-Chalcedonians into the church of the empire, and thereby gain influence in Persia.[21] Justinian's policy of rapprochement in the first half of the 530s was therefore perhaps not only a matter of internal affairs but might have been also designed with an eye on foreign affairs, in other words, to broaden the empire's influence towards the East. However, this policy failed in 536 because the papacy was not interested in and blocked any concessions towards the non-Chalcedonians. The Council of Constantinople in 536 condemned several leading non-Chalcedonians, for example Severus of

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[19] Carolus Kuberczyk, *Canones Iohannis bar Cursus, Tellae Mauzlatae Episcopi, e Codicibus Syriacis Parisino et Quattuor Londiniensibus editi,* Leipzig 1901, 94–97. The place name Beth Qaddišā is missing in other manuscripts; see *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, ed. and trans. A. Vööbus, 2 Vols., CSCO 367, 368, Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975, 220f (205); for Beth Qaddišā see *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Margâ A.D. 840*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge, 2 Vols., London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. 1893, 344 (600) which mentions a village of that name, probably in Persia. For John's works see below "John of Tella as Author".

[20] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1972, 283f. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh*, 176f.

Jacob Baradaeus, after whom the Syrian Orthodox are mislabeled "Jacobites", was the titular metropolitan of Edessa, and ordained a new episcopal leadership after the previous episcopal hierarchy had died away at the beginning of the 550s; see David D. Bundy, "Jacob Baradaeus. The State of Research, a Review of Sources and a New Approach", *Muséon* 91 (1978), 45–86; for Jacob Baradaeus and Theodore of Arabia see Ernest Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VIe siècle*, CSCO 127, Subsidia 2, Louvain: L. Durbecq 1951, 157–177.

[21] Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 724 points out that a Christian, even if non-Chalcedonian, Lakhmid king would have been a threat especially to the pagan Persian kings. See also the East Syrian *Chronicle of Seert* for non-Chalcedonian initiatives in Persia and Arabia: *Histoire Nestorienne (Chronique de Séert)*, ed. and trans. Addaï Scher, in *PO* 7, Paris: Firmin Didot 1950, 142–145.

Antioch, and gave way for a new persecution of non-Chalcedonians. Ephrem of Amida, the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch (526–545), made his infamous "descent to the East" as John of Ephesus records it, and tried to hunt down John of Tella. John posed such a danger to imperial policy that Ephrem even came to terms with Persian officials, and requested that they find John for the patriarch on their territory as John had again crossed the border to Persia. Persian troops finally captured the former bishop of Tella in the mountains around Singara in Persia in early February 537. Ephrem escorted him to Antioch where John died in custody on February 6, 538.[22]

JOHN OF TELLA AS AN AUTHOR

John's widespread fame, commemorated for later generations by his two biographers, lies in his restless efforts to establish an ecclesiastical hierarchy and to provide non-Chalcedonian communities with clerics and sacraments. However, this pastoral undertaking did not stand isolated but was supported by his guidance for the ordained non-Chalcedonians. His writings show John as a bishop who not only ordained non-Chalcedonian clerics in order to recruit loyal followers but who was also very much concerned about their *orthopraxis*, in other words, that the newly ordained clergy could perform their duties according to canonical law. Bishops and church synods in antiquity often complained about improperly instructed clergy but in the time of the 520s and 530s when all the non-Chalcedonian bishops were in hiding it must have been especially difficult to instruct non-Chalcedonian clergy properly.[23] A couple of John's works that have survived include in particular canons on church practice that demonstrate John's awareness of this situation. The exiled bishop of Tella was very keen to reform the clergy and took great care in instructing his priests and deacons properly for their

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[22] John died as confessor according to the Syrian Orthodox Church and is commemorated on the date of his death; see Aphram I Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls. A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, 275.

[23] For a general overview of canonical decisions concerning priestly misbehavior in late antiquity see Karl Leo Noethlichs, "Anspruch und Wirklichkeit. Fehlverhalten und Amtspflichtverletzungen des christlichen Klerus anhand der Konzilskanones des 4. bis 8. Jahrhunderts", *ZSRG.K* 76 (1990), 1–61; for a short introduction to the situation in Syria in the sixth century see Volker Menze, "Priests, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in Sixth Century Syria", *Hugoye. Journal of Syriac Studies* 7.2 (2004) [http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol7No2/HV7N2Menze.html], pars. 1–21.

duties. John's literary oeuvre seems to have consisted primarily of instructions in form of rules, canons, and letters advising on church doctrine. The surviving portion is small, but as John's biographer Elias mentions, John wrote relentlessly everywhere in matters of faith, and he must have been quite a productive author and anxious teacher who looked after his flock.[24]

Some of John's texts have been known already for more than a century, but were hardly taken into account by scholars: Already in 1859 Thomas Lamy published one of John's longest surviving texts, a collection of 48 *šūālē* posed by the priest Sergius, accompanied by John's answers.[25] *Šūālē* are questions, to which John presents canonically binding answers.[26] These *Questions and Answers* focus on the crucial matter of the Eucharist, but John also debates questions concerning deaconesses and women in the church generally, as well as heretics and heretical sacraments or altars. Since this text includes the above-mentioned reference to the most likely Persian bishop Mār Abbas of Beth Qaddišā, John must have given the answers after he had already established ties with non-Chalcedonians across the border, in other words, between 525 and 537.[27]

A text which can often be found in the manuscripts together with John's *Questions and Answers* are his *Canons*. They were also already first published more than a hundred years ago, but not widely read by scholars.[28] John addresses his 27 *Canons* to priests especially in villages (only one canon

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[24] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 62 (Ghanem, 72f).

[25] Thomas Lamy, *Dissertatio de Syrorum Fide et Disciplina in Re Eucharistica*, Louvain: Vanlinthout 1859, 61–97 with Latin translation; French translation: François Nau, *Les Canons et les Résolutions Canoniques,* Paris: P. Lethielleux 1906, 8–19.

[26] These *Questions and Answers* have survived in different versions and have been (re)edited and translated from a different manuscript by Arthur Vööbus; see *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 211–221 (197–205). For the text and the different versions see also Arthur Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde* Vol. 1, B, Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO 1970, 263–269.

[27] More generally dated by Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen* Vol. 1, B, 267f to after 519. See also Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 50.

[28] Kuberczyk, *Canones Iohannis bar Cursus, Tellae Mauzlatae Episcopi*; French translation: Nau, *Les Canons et les Résolutions Canoniques,* 20–30. Arthur Vööbus reedited them from another manuscript and discussed them in his *Kanonessammlungen*; *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 145–156 (142–151); Arthur Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde* Vol. 1, A, Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO 1970, 156–164.

is addressed to priests in monasteries[29]), and admonishes them not only to be steadfast in their non-Chalcedonian faith, but also to abstain from secular business, and to learn their duties as priests concerning the sacraments etc. Based on these *Canons*, it is tempting to conclude that the (non-Chalcedonian) clergy, perhaps especially under conditions of discrimination or persecution, often did not live up to standards as requested by church law.[30] It was part of John's agenda to remind the newly ordained clergy of their duties so that they would be able to keep up to their ecclesiastical rank. The *Canons* can therefore be dated to the period when John started to ordain priests, probably around 522/3.[31] An additional canon appears in the British Library Ms. 14493, and it is addressed to priests administering martyr shrines.[32] John ruled, apparently against common practice, that the gifts from the laity for these shrines should not be redirected into the pockets of the priests. As it has not previously been edited, its edition and translation is added here as an appendix.[33]

Probably at the same time John also wrote a *Rule* for deacons and advised them on how they should assist the priest or bishop at the altar preparing the Eucharist.[34] The genre of the text differs from his *Questions and Answers* or *Canons*, but John's purpose of instructing his newly ordained clergy is the same. He may have given out these instructions after he ordained a couple, a dozen or sometimes even a hundred new deacons in a mass ordination like the one in which he ordained John of Ephesus together with John of Ephesus' fellow monks in 529.[35]

John of Tella also provided pastoral care for the monks of the Mār Zakkai monastery near Callinicum, in which he had been an inmate before

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[29] Canon 11.

[30] If the date 522/3 (see below) is correct, proper instruction of clergy was a general problem, probably only increased by situation of the non-Chalcedonians in the 520s and 530s. For the problem of poorly educated and uninstructed priests see Menze, "Priests, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in Sixth Century Syria".

[31] The reference to Philoxenus of Mabbug in Canon 1 indicates that Philoxenus might still have been alive, and Philoxenus died probably in 523.

[32] See already Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen.* Vol. 1, A, 157 and 160f.

[33] A French translation can be found in Nau, *Les Canons et les Résolutions Canoniques,* 26f.

[34] Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 54–60.

[35] Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 79.

being elevated to the see of Tella.[36] In the only surviving canon, of originally at least 48 canons, John – referring to the bishop Rabbula of Edessa (412–435) as authority – rules against rigorous fasters who apparently lived from the Eucharist alone, and therefore received extra portions of it.[37] John probably wrote these canons after he had left the monastery as a refugee for the second time, that is after 522.[38]

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[36] For bishops as pastoral care-takers, especially Severus of Antioch see Pauline Allen, "Severus of Antioch and Pastoral Care", in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church* Vol. 2, ed. P. Allen, W. Meyer, L. Cross, Everton Park: Center for Early Christian Studies 1999, 387–400; eadem, "Severus of Antioch as Pastoral Carer", in *StPatr* 35 (2001), 353–368; eadem/Wendy Mayer, "Towards a definition of Pastoral Care in Late Antiquity", *Aug.* 40 (2000), 345–397; for John in particular see Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 76–80.

The location of the monastery is not clear: it can perhaps be identified with the monastery now excavated at Tall Biʿa; see Manfred Krebernik, "Schriftfunde aus Tall Biʿa 1990", *MDOG* 123 (1991), 41–70. See also Gabor Kalla, "Das ältere Mosaik des byzantinischen Klosters in Tall Biʿa", *MDOG* 123 (1991), 35–39. Eva Strommenger, "Ausgrabungen in Tall Biʿa", *MDOG* 125 (1993), 7–10; eadem, "Die Ausgrabungen in Tall Biʿa 1993", *MDOG* 126 (1994), 24–31; the Syriac texts are not exact about its whereabouts: John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 18, 515 speaks of it as being "in the city of Callinicum", the discussed canon is introduced as "for those in Beth Mār Zakkai which is by the side of Callinicum"; see next footnote.

[37] Edited and translated in *Syriac and Arabic Documents regarding Legislation relative to Syrian Asceticism*, ed. and trans. A. Vööbus, Stockholm: Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile 1960, 60f. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, Vol. 3, 179-181 discussed this canon, and mentions that it is also preserved in Cambridge Add. 2023. The second half of this canon can be found in British Library Add. 17193; see Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1001.

[38] As refugee in the monastery: John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 18, 515; for the date see also Georg G. Blum, *Rabbula von Edessa. Der Christ, der Bischof, der Theologe*, CSCO 300, Louvain 1969, 115 who believes that John wrote the text 519-521, and Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, 181 who generally dates it to the time after John had left the monastery as a monk. When John was bishop of Tella, Paul, another non-Chalcedonian, was bishop of Callinicum and should have advised the monks in his diocese about canon laws – not John. John also did not write these 48 canons when he stayed in the monastery as a refugee because the one surviving canon remarks that John "heard" about the abuse of the Eucharist – an unlikely phrasing if John would have been present in the monastery.

It is difficult to date John's *Commentary on the Trisagion* in which he defends the non-Chalcedonian addition "who was crucified for us" to the so-called Trisagion against Chalcedonian accusations.[39] The controversy over this addition had started already in the fifth century and the introduction of the addition to the liturgy in Constantinople caused a substantial political crisis in 512, during which the emperor Anastasius (491–518) almost lost his crown.[40] Since John requests in his *Canons* that priests must recite the Trisagion with addition in the morning and in the evening (Canon 18), he might have written the commentary after he had written the *Canons* in order to expand on the significance of the Trisagion and its addition.

Two documents survive which are co-authored by John. Upon the request of Severus of Antioch several exiled non-Chalcedonian bishops in the patriarchate of Antioch – among them John of Tella – composed a letter in which they warned non-Chalcedonian monks of the Julianist heresy.[41] It

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Therefore John probably wrote the canons some time later when the monks had probably been in lack of episcopal supervision for a couple of years.

[39] Vincenzo Poggi and Mar Grigorios (Hanna Ibrahim), "Il commento al Trisagio di Giovanni Bar Qūrsūs", *OCP* 52 (1986), 202–210. Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 51 pondered too much about the Trisagion itself when he falsely called John's text a "Hymnus de Trisagio"; the Trisagion has been called a hymn, but John's text is just a commentary; see also Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 170–175.

[40] Robert Taft, "Trisagion", in *ODB* 3 (1991), 2121; Juan Mateos, *La Célébration de la Parole dans la Liturgie Byzantine. Étude Historique*, Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium 1971; Alois Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Vol. II/2, *Die Kirche von Konstantinopel im 6. Jahrhundert*, Freiburg: Herder 1989 ["reprint" 2004: note that the "reprint" differs considerably for these pages], 334–336; Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 165–175.

For the riots in Constantinople in 512 see Fiona Haarer, *Anastasius I. Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World*, Cambridge: Francis Cairns 2006, 156f.

[41] Severus, *Select Letters* V. 14, in *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus*, ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, 4 Vols., London: Williams and Norgate 1902–4, 389-394 (345–350) is a letter to the non-Chalcedonian bishops John (of Tella), Philoxenus (of Doliche), and Thomas (probably the bishop of Dara), "confessors on the mountain of Marde". From Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60 (Ghanem, 71) it is likely that this Thomas was Thomas of Dara. The other authors or subscribers to the letter, Sergius of Cyrrhus, Marion of Sura, and Nonnus of Circesium, lived close by; Severus, *Select Letters* V. 15, Brooks, 394–405 (350–359); Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 60 (Ghanem, 71).

was written probably c. 522/3–525 when John of Tella and other bishops were in hiding around Marde.

John also co-authored with other non-Chalcedonian bishops the *Plerophoria*, "a supplication to the king [Justinian I] concerning their faith," which the bishops sent to Justinian when they came for the discussion of faith to Constantinople in 532/3. Although Pseudo-Zachariah, who preserves the text in his *Church History*, does not name the authors, there can hardly be any doubt that John was one of its authors as he belonged to the non-Chalcedonian episcopal delegation that met with the Chalcedonian bishops in 532/3.[42]

John's last work was probably the *Profession of Faith*. John wrote it at the end of his life shortly before the Chalcedonians caught him in 537 as will be argued below ("The Date of John's *Profession of Faith*").

It is likely that not all of John's works have survived as Elias notes in his biography that the exiled John took his pastoral care seriously "by writing everywhere continually, warning, advising, and teaching from the Holy Scriptures and from the teachings of the spiritual Fathers."[43] These might have been in particular letters warning his addressees of the heresy of Julian of Halicarnassus which seems to have become quite popular in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.[44]

For the text see René Draguet, "Une pastorale antijulianiste des environs de l'année 530", *Muséon* 40 (1927), 75–92 together with Arthur Vööbus, "Entdeckung neuer Handschriften des antijulianischen Pastoralschreibens", *OrChr* 66 (1982), 114–117 who identifies the subscribing non-Chalcedonian bishops. See also the partial edition and translation of the letter by Ignatius Rahmani, *Studia Syriaca*, Vol. 1, Sharfeh: Typis Patriarchalibus 1904, ܚܡ-ܚܢ (24f). For the Julianists see below "John's Christology" and "Date of John's *Profession of Faith*".

[42] Ps.-Zachariah Rhetor, *Church History* IX.15 (*Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, CSCO 84/88, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, Paris 1919-24, 115–122 (79-84); English translation: *Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, trans. F. J. Hamilton – E. W. Brooks, London: Methuen & Co 1899, 246–252). It is called *Plerophoria* in the discussions of 532/3: see Brock, "The Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)", 87–121, here: 92f. For the varying description of the *Plerophoria* see idem, 88 n.7.

[43] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks, 62 (Ghanem, 72f).

[44] For Julian of Halicarnassus and the Julianists see below "John's Christology" and "Date of John's *Profession of Faith*".

JOHN OF TELLA'S *PROFESSION OF FAITH*

THE MANUSCRIPT BRITISH LIBRARY ADD. 14549

The *Profession of Faith* survives in a single manuscript preserved today in the British Library, Add. 14549, fols. 219b-226b.[1] According to William Wright it "is written in a good, regular Estrangĕlā of the viiith or ixth cent." The manuscript contains translated works by Gregory of Nazianzus, select epistles by Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus and finally, starting on fol. 219b, John of Tella's *Profession of Faith*. John's text is simply introduced as "The faith of the venerable and holy bishop of Tella;" his name "John" comes up when John introduces himself to his addressees a few lines below and at the very end of the text (fol. 226b): "The letter of the venerable and holy John, bishop of Tella." John's *Profession of Faith* covers 15 manuscript pages and ends with a note by the scribe, Abraham of Beth Ṣūrāyā. A later addition possibly indicating a later owner of the manuscript has been almost completely erased.

THE TITLE *PROFESSION OF FAITH*

John's *Profession of Faith* is a letter to the monks and monasteries around Tella in which John puts forward his beliefs. As mentioned above, the scribe titled it "The faith of the venerable and holy bishop of Tella," whereas William Wright speaks of the "Confession of Faith of John, bishop of Tellā or Constantina […], in form of a letter to the convents around that city."[2] Considering Augustine's famous *Confessions*, the term "Confession" may raise the wrong expectations among scholars of late antiquity as John's intentions were less ambitious than those of the bishop of Hippo. The title *Confession of Faith* is also not adopted here as John's letter never occupied any formal or official position as creed among non-Chalcedonian communities in the way early modern *Confessions of Faith* like the Calvinist *Westminster*

[1] At least no other manuscript is known to us; for the manuscript see Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 428–31, especially 431.

[2] Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 431.

Confession of Faith from 1643–7 did.[3] John provides an idiosyncratic sketch of the establishment of the Church based on Paul, the Church's Trinitarian and especially Christological beliefs, and of the dangers the Church had to face in John's days. A few times John declares what non-Chalcedonians believe in form of a profession (five times on 222[a]-223[a]: "We profess…"), and he defines his faith through theological argument based on the New Testament as well as in contrast to heretics whom the first three ecumenical councils had condemned. It seems justified, therefore, to give this text, which provides the non-Chalcedonian monastic communities of John's (former) diocese with their exiled bishop's understanding of Church and faith, the title John of Tella's *Profession of Faith*.[4]

STRUCTURE OF THE *PROFESSION OF FAITH*

In his *Profession of Faith* John discusses three main topics: the establishment of the Church, the Trinity and Christology. These topics are not strictly separated as John presents them interconnected. In other words, the Trinity is discussed together with the church councils that canonized this Trinity (especially the Council of Nicaea) and the naming of the heretics whom these councils condemned. Obviously some of these heretics show up again for the discussion of Christology and also the discussion of how the Church was built cannot proceed without mentioning the heretics who did not build on Christ's foundation.

The *Profession of Faith* is written in the form of a letter, and after the title John presents the addressees: the abbots, priests, deacons and monks from the monasteries around Tella and the countryside, and introduces himself as bishop of Tella.[5] The first section focuses on the foundation of the Church and occupies three manuscript pages (219[b]-220[b]). The Church of course begins with Christ, but right after him John places Paul, "the wise

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[3] The *OED* defines a *Confession of Faith* as "an authoritative declaration of the articles of belief" and refers to the *Confessions of Faith* of the various reformed churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

[4] See *OED*, "Profession", especially 4a. The text, however, has also been called *Libellus Fidei* by Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 51, and also *Statement of Faith* in Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, passim, but this seems too casual.

[5] The priests and deacons seem to be monks of the monasteries, but etiquette requires John to distinguish them from the general "brotherhood".

master-builder", who built a "spiritual foundation."[6] Paul plays a decisive role for the establishment of the Church and John draws here especially on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. He attests to the fact that his addressees are of one mind with the master-builder by pleasing God through love, faith, and hope (1 Cor 13.13). Also all other saints and martyrs embellished the building, i.e. the "Church," by following Paul.

The next section (220[b]-221[b]) focuses on the Holy Trinity by defining it through the three ecumenical councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (I) (431). The councils established the right faith about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by condemning the heretics.[7] John also clarifies why the Council of Chalcedon could not have been ecumenical: as there is a Trinity in heaven, and no "quaternity", there can also be only three church councils on earth.[8] John moves on to a small transitional section (221[b]-222[a]), positioning his addressees and himself at the end of a straight line from Paul (and the apostles, who evangelized different countries) and the church councils in the following centuries. In this way he places the non-Chalcedonians as the rightful successors of the apostles and the church fathers. Since "we are proceeding in their footsteps," the non-Chalcedonian present is built upon the biblical, apostolic and patristic past.

As his main topic John introduces the nature of Christ. He starts out with the Trinity (222[a]), and continues with the incarnation of Christ (222[a]-223[a]): "He was born without a beginning and the Son of the Supreme One started in the womb of the Virgin" (222[a]). Christ had two births, but only one nature, and the union of the Son incarnate occurred without confusion and change. Moving on to Christ's indestructibility (223[a]-223[b]), John discusses the Son's death which annihilates the death of humans. Arguing that through his suffering, the savior granted impassibility to humans, John demonstrates that Christology laid at the heart of the non-Chalcedonian soteriology. None of the heretics would be saved because they could not perceive the divine mysteries. John warns his audience of these heretics (223[b]), beginning with the heresiarchs of the Ancient Church like Valen-

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[6] John also calls Christ "the foundation" but mainly discusses as "foundation" the spiritual edifice that Paul and following him "orthodox" Christians established throughout the centuries. See below "John of Tella, the Apostle Paul, and the Foundation of the Church".

[7] For the heretics see "John's List of Heretics" below.

[8] For a discussion of this statement see "Conclusion: A Bishop's Spiritual Legacy" below.

tinus, Apollinaris and Paul of Samosata up to the dyophysites like Nestorius, Theodoret or Leo.

The next, long section (223b-225b) John spends on New Testament accounts of Christ that prove the non-Chalcedonian one-nature-Christology. This long section is divided in two parts. In the first (223b-225a), John quotes the passages that (according to John) the Chalcedonians would use to divide Father and Son. He rebukes their hypothesis and calls them "heathens and worshippers of idols and appropriately they are named Jews and crucifiers." In the second part (225a-225b), referring to the Gospel of John, he lays down how God the Word became flesh. This section concludes with the soteriological note that the "Father gave His only begotten Son for the sake of the salvation of the world."

In his conclusion (225b-226b) John returns to Paul whom he quotes in favor of the one-nature-Christology. John expects that his addressees learned from his instructions that they must avoid (communion with) the heretics: "Preserve this plain faith of yours, which you have learnt from those holy ones at Nicaea. To that no hated attrition from the heretics should enter, which is a sickness of faith" (226a).

JOHN'S LIST OF HERETICS

In John's time, heresiologies had long been established, the most famous probably being Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* ("Against the Heresies") from the second, and Epiphanius' *Panarion* ("Medicine Chest") from the fourth century.[9] Heresiology is a genre that by definition does not try to present the opponents' doctrines truthfully. Cyril of Alexandria's wise statement that "not everything what the heretics say is necessary to flee from and to avoid, because we also agree with many of those things that they agree with" finds no justification in heresiologies.[10] Here, heretics are simply bad, and nothing they say can be regarded as sensible or truthful. The goal of a heresiology or a list of heretics from whom an author wishes to disassociate himself is that readers or hearers recognize that its writer is of orthodox belief.

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[9] For heresiologies and problems concerning heresy vs. orthodoxy see Averil Cameron, "How to read Heresiologies", *JMEMS* 33.3 (2003), 471–492; Norbert Brox, "Häresie", in *RAC* 13 (1986), 248–297, here 284–287. S. Elm, É. Rébillard, A. Romano (eds.), *Orthodoxie, christianisme, histoire*, Rome: École française de Rome 2000; for heresy and its legal aspects see Caroline Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, especially 225–232.

[10] Cyril of Alexandria, *Letter to Eulogius*, in *ACO* I.1.4, Schwartz, 35.

John's list of heretics differs in some respects from the ones that can be found in other contemporary non-Chalcedonian statements of faith. Examples include the aforementioned *Plerophoria*, but also Severus of Antioch's address at the beginning of his tenure as patriarch of Antioch in 512, Jacob of Sarug's letters to the archimandrite of the Mār Bassus monastery, the letter of Simeon of Beth Aršam about Barsauma of Nisibis, and a short unpublished document on faith by exiled non-Chalcedonian bishops in Alexandria from the 520s.[11] John draws a vivid picture of his list of top heretics whom he condemned:

> Nestorius thought of Him as a man who dwelt in Him, that is, God the Word. Eutyches, as he complied with the doctrine of Mani and of Valentinus, thought of Him in terms of hallucinations and illusions considering the mystery of the humanization of God the Word, and thus he insulted our Savior. Arius and Eunomius the blasphemers thought of Him as the son of the Creator and of a created woman. They abased the hypostasis of the spirit from the nature of the Godhead. When he tried to show that our Lord was vain and not perfect, Apollinaris blasphemed rashly and said that God the Word was embodied within the mind and the soul. Macedonius ventured iniquitously when he said that the Holy Spirit was utterly not within the nature of the Godhead. Paul of Samosata, Diodore, Theodore, Nestorius, Ibas, Theodoret, the Council of Chalcedon and the *Tome* of Leo all drank from the one and the same pit of stinking filth.

A few of these heretics show up also in other passages of the *Profession of Faith* as well, especially Nestorius as the main target of the non-Chalcedonians. He had not only been Cyril's opponent but also the main source of the Chalcedonian heresy in the non-Chalcedonian understanding. From a dogmatic point of view John is right to see him in line with the strict dyophysite theologians Diodore of Tarsus (c. 378–392) and his pupil

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[11] M.-A. Kugener, "Allocution prononcée par Sévère après son elevation sur le trône patriarchal d'Antioche", *OrChr* 2 (1902), 265–282; Jacob of Sarug, *Letters* 14–17, in *Epistulae quotquot supersunt*, ed. Gunnar Olinder, CSCO 110, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO 1965, 58–86 (*Les Lettres de Jacques de Saroug*, trans. Micheline Albert, Patrimoine Syriaque 3, Kaslik: Université Saint Esprit de Kaslik 2004, 93–128); Simeon of Beth Aršam: Assemanus, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana* Vol. 1, 346–358; the document on faith by non-Chalcedonian bishops (probably written in the 520s): Harvard Ms. 22, fols. 70 and 1; for this see Sebastian Brock, "Some New Letters of the Patriarch Severus", *StPatr* 12 (1975), 17–24. Akalın and Menze plan to publish this short text soon.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (392/3–428). Personally these two had not taken part in the "Nestorian Controversy", but they were regarded as the spiritual teachers of Nestorius, and as the leading theologians of the so called "Antiochene School".[12] Diodore was condemned as heretic in the Roman Empire in 499, and Theodore awaited the same fate at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.[13] Like Theodore of Mopsuestia, also Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c. 423–466) and Ibas of Edessa (435–457) became subjects of the so-called Three Chapter Controversy that led to the Second Council of Constantinople.[14] Whereas Theodoret had been a highly productive and very skilful dyophysite theologian, hardly anything of Ibas' writings has survived and it is difficult to reconstruct his dogmatic position.[15] Ibas' notoriety lies in the fact that he had written a letter in 433 to a Persian bishop, Mari, in which he criticized Cyril of Alexandria. That this letter caused such an uproar is only understandable if one considers the heated Christological debates at this time. Ibas succeeded Rabbula (412–435), a steadfast Cyrillian, as bishop of Edessa, and apparently caused tensions within the Christian community in Edessa. He was charged several times with various accusations and condemned as heretic together with Theodoret by the Second Council of Ephesus (449), a council that was presided by Dioscorus, the

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[12] "School" is set into quotation marks because the term can be misleading; see Paul. L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God. The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004, 137–139. For Diodore see Therese Fuhrer, "Diodor von Tarsus", in *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, ed. S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, Freiburg: Herder 3rd edn. 2002, 199f; for Theodore see Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, London and New York: Routledge 2009; for Theodore's Christology: Frederick G. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ's Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press 2005. Theodore came to be considered the most prominent theologian – the "interpreter" – of the Church of the East in Persia.

[13] For the early discussions about the two theologians see Luise Abramowski, "Der Streit um Diodor und Theodor zwischen den beiden ephesinischen Konzilien", *ZKG* 67 (1955/6), 252–287.

[14] As introduction to Theodoret see Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus. The Bishop and the Holy Man*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 2002; for his Christology see now Paul B. Clayton, Jun., *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus. Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451),* Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007.

[15] Claudia Rammelt, *Ibas von Edessa: Rekonstruktion einer Biographie und dogmatischen Position zwischen den Fronten*, Berlin: de Gruyter 2008; see also Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom*, 46–76.

patriarch of Alexandria (444–451), and called a *latrocinium*, a "robber-council", by Pope Leo.[16] Two years later, at the Council of Chalcedon, the positions were reversed. Leo's *Tome* was accepted (it had not even been read out at Ephesus although the pope had written it in June 449), Dioscorus was deposed and Theodoret and Ibas regarded orthodox. However, the discussions around Theodoret and Ibas continued after their deaths and led to the condemnation of Theodoret's dogmatic writings and Ibas' letter to Mari in 553.

This short excursus explains why John groups Leo, the Council of Chalcedon, Nestorius and the eastern dyophysite bishops together. Nevertheless John misrepresents the various Christological parties, as Leo had hardly much in common with the so-called "Antiochene School," members or followers of this "school" like Theodoret and Ibas had actually condemned Nestorius, and Theodore of Mopsuestia had not even known about the controversy because he died in communion with the Church before its outbreak. However, John does not argue here as a theologian, but as a partisan of the non-Chalcedonian cause. The subtleties of the Christological discourse are of no interest to him here as it is his objective to stress to his monkish audience the heretical position of his opponents, the Chalcedonians.

Therefore it made sense for John to include in the same group a heretic of old, Paul of Samosata as someone who drank "from the one and the same pit of stinking filth" (of "Nestorianism"). Paul had been bishop of Antioch from 261 to 268 when he was condemned by a church council. It is impossible today to reconstruct fully his dogmatic position, but fifth and sixth century theologians accused him of having refuted the incarnation of the Logos.[17] Already Nestorius was charged with being a follower of Paul of Samosata, and regarding Christ merely as human. By including Paul among the "Nestorians", John accuses the Chalcedonians of building their Christological beliefs on a heresy condemned for centuries.

Apollinaris of Laodikeia (360–392) and Eutyches (370–after 451) present rather difficult cases. Both were condemned as heretics, but their

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[16] *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449*, ed. Johannes Flemming with German translation by Georg Hoffmann, AGWG.PH 15.1, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung 1917.

[17] Gustav Bardy, *Paul de Samosate. Étude Historique*, Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense 1929. Winrich Löhr, "Paulus von Samosata", in *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, ed. S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, Freiburg: Herder 3rd edn. 2002, 558f.

Christologies were rather close to the non-Chalcedonian Christology. In fact, several of Apollinaris' works have survived under the name of church fathers (for example under the name of maybe the most revered church father, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (328–373)), and used by Cyril of Alexandria and the non-Chalcedonians to support their case.[18] The archimandrite Eutyches had been directly involved in the Christological discussions around the Council of Chalcedon, and John clearly needed to disassociate himself from him.[19]

The Alexandrian presbyter Arius (c. 260–336) was the opponent of Athanasius of Alexandria, who ensured through his many writings that Arius became the heresiarch of late antiquity and made it into almost every list of heretics.[20] Arius' Trinitarian debate about how the Son was subordinate and similar to, but not of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father, led to the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) which condemned Arius and his followers. Similar theological arguments are expressed by Eunomius of Cyzicus (c. 360–394) and therefore it seems that John falsely believes (fol. 220b) that Eunomius had been condemned by the Council of Nicaea as well.[21] However, John separates Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople (c. 342–360) from Arius and Eunomius, although Macedonius should also be grouped among the *Homoiousioi*.[22]

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[18] Already in the discussions of 532/3 the Chalcedonian bishop Hypatius questioned non-Chalcedonian proof texts as Apollinarian forgeries; see Innocentius 24f, in *ACO* IV.2, 172f.

[19] Eutyches' strict miaphysite, maybe even monophysite, position had been the reason for his condemnation in 448 by the bishop of Constantinople. The Second Council of Ephesus under Dioscorus rehabilitated him but the Council of Chalcedon condemned him again. Both Chalcedonians as well as non-Chalcedonians regarded him as a heretic; see Georg May, "Das Lehrverfahren gegen Eutyches im November des Jahres 448. Zur Vorgeschichte des Konzils von Chalkedon", *AHC* 21 (1989), 1–61; see also *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, Vol. 1, trans. with introduction and notes by R. Price and M. Gaddis, TTH 45, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2005, 25–30.

[20] Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans 2001; Richard P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1988.

[21] But Eunomius had been exiled several times because of his teachings; for him see Richard P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000.

[22] Hanson, *The Search for the Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381*, 349f.

Valentinus was a second century theologian in Rome whose teaching has only survived in a few fragments and later heresiologies can hardly help to reconstruct his original teachings.[23] Grouping him with the Persian Mani (216–277) shows that John had very little reliable information about Valentinus and probably also did not care to present the heretics of old accurately. Mani considered himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, and his followers, the Manichaeans, thought of themselves as true Christians. However, Manichaeism was a dualistic religion which incorporated Jewish and Christian but also Zoroastrian and Buddhist elements. Already in pre-Constantinian times under the emperor Diocletian (284–305), Manichaeism was forbidden as an unlawful sect and under the Christian emperors more severely persecuted than any other heresy.[24]

The comparison with contemporary non-Chalcedonian list of heretics reveals that the "Nestorian" group always needed to be included.[25] If put in a hierarchical order, the "Nestorians" would have the lead as they posed John's main opponents. Nevertheless disassociation from Eutyches (and Apollinaris) was important as well.[26] Other heresiarchs like Arius, or heretics of old about whom hardly anything was known like Valentinus or even non-Christians like Mani might have been an individual choice.[27] Including

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[23] Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1992.

[24] Andreas Hoffmann, "Mani", in *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, ed. S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, Freiburg: Herder 3rd edn. 2002, 477–480; see also Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1992; Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity*, 244-252.

[25] A short sketch provides André de Halleux, "Die Genealogie des Nestorianismus nach der frühmonophysitischen Theologie", *OrChr* 66 (1982), 1–14.

[26] Already Philoxenus claimed that non-Chalcedonianism did not adhere to Apollinaris; see Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Memre against Habib V*, in *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis Dissertationes Decem de Uno e Sancta Trinitate Incorporato et Passo*, ed. and trans. Maurice Brière and François Graffin, in *PO* 38, Turnhout: Brepols 1977, 609-633, here 627.

[27] Most non-Chalcedonian list of heretics do not mention Valentinus or Mani, but the document on faith by the non-Chalcedonian bishops in Alexandria from the 520s includes these two as well as several other heretics who cannot be found in John's *Profession of Faith*.

a semi-Christian sect could also demonstrate the universal claim of orthodox Christianity.[28]

Although the *Profession of Faith* is too short to provide any elaborated genealogy of heresies, John's understanding of heretics is part of his perception of the development of the Church: "The Council of Chalcedon did not build upon the foundation which the divine master-builder Paul had laid, but upon the sand which Nestorius, the confounder and the destroyer, had laid" (221[b]). In other words, whereas the non-Chalcedonians handed down the tradition of the Scripture and the apostles, and built on the Church established by Christ and Paul, the heretics handed down a tradition of heresy (since Nestorius or, if Valentinus or Paul of Samosata are taken into account, for centuries). John goes even further by claiming that "the Nestorians and all the heretics have not perceived these mysteries and they have not derived this sense of life" (fol. 223[b]). Heretics have no part in God's *oikonomia* and do not partake in the Christian history of salvation.[29] The *Profession of Faith* includes heretics who in no way have anything to do with Chalcedonian or East Syrian Christological understandings in order to present non-Chalcedonianism as the only fortress against *the* evil in this world.[30] John's inclusive approach also underlines his claim on orthodoxy. By disassociating himself from all these heresies, he could expand on his own, that is, orthodox and canonical teaching.

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[28] Other Christian authors in different periods would also include Judaism or Islam in their heresiologies. For an introduction to heresiologies in late antiquity and Byzantium see Cameron, "How to read Heresiologies".

[29] *Oikonomia* here in the sense of divine rule of the world; for the wide range of meanings of *oikonomia* in the Greek tradition see especially Hamilcar S. Alivizatos, *Die Oikonomia. Die Oikonomia nach dem kanonischen Recht der orthodoxen Kirche*, Frankfurt a. M.: Otto Lembeck 1998; see also the extensive work by Gerhard Richter, *Oikonomia. Der Gebrauch des Wortes Oikonomia im Neuen Testament, bei den Kirchenvätern und in der theologischen Literatur bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin – New York: de Gruyter 2005.

[30] In a different way already John Rufus presented Chalcedonianism as *the* evil: with the Council of Chalcedon the Anti-Christ came into this world; see Volker Menze, "Die Stimme von Maiuma: Johannes Rufus, das Konzil von Chalkedon und die wahre Kirche", in *Literarische Konstituierung von Identifikationsfiguren in der Antike*, B. Aland, J. Hahn, C. Ronning,Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2003, 215–232, here 220–223.

JOHN'S CHRISTOLOGY

John's *Profession of Faith* combines positive statements of faith with slanderous refutations of the Chalcedonian formula of faith. In other words, John works both as theologian as well as polemic who hardly wished to give credit to his opponents' persuasions. This hermeneutical approach was not new, but could look back to many predecessors, not the least of whom were from the time after the Council of Chalcedon. Timothy Aelurus, the patriarch of Alexandria (457–60; 475–7), refuted polemically Leo's dyophysite *Tome* passage by passage.[31] As Leo's *Tome* remains a main obstacle for non-Chalcedonians, it is not surprising that a short refutation of the *Tome* can also be detected in John's *Profession of Faith*. In 224[a] John refers to unspecified heretics ("they attribute"…), but the enumeration of what "they" – based on the New Testament – attribute to the one born of the Virgin (swaddling clothes, baptism by John), and what "they" attribute to "the One from the Father" (he walked on the water and he filled the multitudes with five loaves of bread), comes at least partially from Leo's *Tome*.[32] Leo had used these examples to show the clear distinction of the two natures in Christ even after the incarnation. He argued that Christ made himself low so that the eternal God would, by uniting divine nature to passible nature, become "the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (see 1 Tim 2.5).

In contrast to Leo's argument, John focuses on the Cyrillian perception of the Logos according to the Gospel of John: "'The Word became flesh and lived among us'" (Jn 1.14; *Profession of Faith* fol. 225[a]). God only became visible in the human Jesus Christ and in this way makes himself manifest to humanity. Before the incarnation no one could see God: "Neither you, nor the angels of heaven, have therefore seen (Him), my brothers" (fol. 225[b]). Christ's incarnation is the humanization of God. Without mixture and change the divine nature and the body unified. They are from two natures, but not in two natures like Leo and the Chalcedonians argued. On this issue of "oneness" John spends several paragraphs in order to refute any divisions in Christ: "He had two births but He was not two. The Scrip-

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[31] R.Y. Ebied and L.R. Wickham, "Timothy Aelurus: Against the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon", in *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History*, ed. C. Laga *et al.*, Leuven: Department Oriëntalistiek and Peeters 1985, 115–166, here 116.

[32] Although the passage in the *Profession of Faith* is quite short, John collects more examples of human and divine attributions than Leo had done in his *Tome*.

tures have preached two beginnings concerning him. But He was not divided into two" (fol. 222[b]). According to the non-Chalcedonians, the Chalcedonians would therefore believe in two sons as John points out numerous times in the *Profession of Faith*: "Those who separate the terms which are placed in the Scriptures (by saying) 'Two Natures', those who suppose these, do not know that they are also preaching two sons" (fol. 224[b]). This erroneous assumption would lead the Chalcedonians to believe falsely in a quaternity of Father, Holy Spirit and two sons (221[a-b], 223[b]).

According to the non-Chalcedonian, Cyrillian understanding, Christ is the savior because he became fully man in such a way that his humanity could only exist in combination with the divine nature. The divine nature itself cannot suffer but it takes part in human proprieties and appropriates human characteristics. Thus Christ "suffered impassibly" – a phrase severely criticised by Nestorius.[33] In other words, the Logos did not suffer as God but as God-in-flesh, the soteriological consequence of which is clearly expressed in the *Profession of Faith*:

> We profess on account of this and this is the true doctrine for us that, although not mortal, He died for us, (and) that because He was not mortal in His nature, He will break through His mortality the dominion of death also, and through His death He will kill our death. […] Now then, the mystery is great, the love profound, and the redemption ineffable. The Immortal One died for the sake of the mortal ones. Through His death He saved them from the mortal nature, and the non-suffering one suffered for the sake of the suffering ones. Through His suffering, He granted impassibility to the suffering ones (fols. 223[a-b])

Christ's crucifixion and its meaning for humankind are at the heart of John's Christological argument, just as Cyril's had already been "fundamentally about soteriology and worship".[34] John argues that Christ was able to suffer because he submitted himself to the conditions and limitations of the incarnation.[35] It was only through Christ's suffering that salvation could be granted to mortals. The struggle between the opposing Christian groups could only reach such a level of tension (which at times vented itself in vio-

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[33] John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy. Its History, Theology, and Texts*, Leiden: Brill 1994 [reprint Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 2004], 175–226, here 185; Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, 146–149.

[34] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 175.

[35] Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, 150–161.

lent outbursts) because matters of Christology were not just an intellectual playground. Rather, the issues of Christ's natures and his ability to suffer laid at the center of the grant of redemption. Already the controversy over the addition "who was crucified for us" to the Trisagion had proved that the soteriological argument was the crucial momentum for the non-Chalcedonians, and John both in his *Canons* as well as in his *Commentary on the Trisagion* had addressed this problem.

The soteriological concern comes also to the forefront in the non-Chalcedonian struggle with Julian of Halicarnassus. Julian had been one of the non-Chalcedonian bishops who refused to sign the papal *libellus* in 519 and left his see in Asia Minor for exile in Egypt. Here he soon started a theological dispute about the (in)corruptibility of Christ's body with Severus, the exiled patriarch of Antioch.[36] According to his opponents, Julian argued that Christ's body was not subject to suffering and passion in the same way as human bodies, a theological perception which would dissolve the soteriological aspect of Christ's conquest of death through his own death. Although Severus condemned Julian, and the other non-Chalcedonian bishops sided with their patriarch, Julianism grew quite strong and found followers in Egypt and among non-Chalcedonians in the patriarchate of Antioch. Elias, John's biographer, mentions that among John's (now lost) correspondence were also letters "which, for the sake of the faith, he kept sending to all places being swept by the teaching, or rather the plague, of this senseless one [Julian]."[37]

Also in his *Profession of Faith*, John discusses the question of Christ's destructibility (fols. 223[a-b]) which indicates that the issue of Julian's heretical teaching had already come up.[38] And although the *Profession of Faith* is to a certain extent a standard refutation of Chalcedonian beliefs, it offers an insight into John's Christological and soteriological mindset, making understandable the reasons why the non-Chalcedonians vigorously defended their Christological position.

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[36] For the theological details see René Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa Controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'Incorruptibilité du Corps du Christ*, Leuven: P. Smeesters 1924; see also Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Vol. II/2, 83–116; Charles Kannengiesser and Markus Stein, "Iulianos VI", *RAC* 19 (2001), 505–508 and Susanne Müller-Abels, "Julian von Halikarnaß", in *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, ed. S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, Freiburg: Herder 3rd edn. 2002, 407.

[37] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks, 62 (Ghanem, 73). One of these letters has survived as discussed above "John of Tella as an Author".

[38] For the date see below "Date of John's *Profession of Faith*".

At first sight it is surprising that John does not refer to the already canonical epithet of *Theotokos* for the Virgin Mary. Nestorius had argued that Mary was the *Christotokos* who gave birth to Christ, but not *Theotokos*, who gave birth to God. Both Chalcedonians as well as non-Chalcedonians agreed that Mary should be regarded as *Theotokos*. John may have passed over it here because it did not offer him the opportunity to warn his audience against the Chalcedonian position.[39] In the *Plerophoria*, co-authored by John, the non-Chalcedonian belief in the *Theotokos* was explicitly pointed out several times, probably because in 532/3 the non-Chalcedonians had good reasons to present common ground with the Chalcedonians. This was hardly the case for the time when John draw up his *Profession of Faith* as will be argued in the next section.

DATE OF JOHN'S *PROFESSION OF FAITH*

As the *Profession* calls John bishop of Tella, John certainly wrote the text after his ordination to the see of Tella in 519. It is tempting to regard it as a circular letter written shortly after his ordination to clarify his dogmatic beliefs and to remind the monks to be steadfast in their beliefs.[40] If John wrote the *Profession* while still bishop of Tella, it would explain why Julian of Halicarnassus is not named among the heretics as the controversy with Severus only broke out at the beginning of the 520s.

However, as mentioned above, John discusses the destructibility of Christ, and that Julian is not referred to by name might be because John wished to avoid the name of the opponent. It was enough to refute the content of Julianist teaching without naming the spiritual mastermind. More likely, however, Julian is not mentioned because the *Profession of Faith* was not written early in the 520s but later when the climax of the dogmatic and polemic discussion between Severus of Antioch and Julian of Halicarnassus had already been over. Although the ecclesiastical controversy between the two parties took decades, Julian probably died around 527 and Severus'

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[39] As discussed above, John is otherwise not shy to accuse the Chalcedonians of being followers of Nestorius.

[40] Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 51; idem, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 91 n. 153 and idem, Menze, "Jacob of Sarug, John of Tella, and Paul of Edessa: Ecclesiastical Politics in Osrhoene 519-522", 427 n. 22.

anti-Julianist works were already translated into Syriac in 528.[41] A parallel case presents the *Plerophoria* of 532/3 which also does not mention Julian of Halicarnassus among the heretics.[42]

That John wrote his *Profession of Faith* late in his life becomes obvious from his description of the building of the apostolic Church. John argues that Christ is the foundation on which Paul built the Church (fols. 219b-222a) and he delineates the process of the establishment of the Church through the patristic period – discussing the church councils – up to himself. The apostles spread the faith by converting the Egyptians, Persians, Parthians etc. These missionary activities continue with John himself who "built upon it [the foundation = Christ] and finished it in the high place and in the upper countries and on the islands of the sea". This sentence John could not have written at the beginning of his episcopal tenure, but he refers here to his pastoral work as bishop in exile, and to his ordinations of thousands of non-Chalcedonian deacons and priests.[43]

"High place" probably refers to the mountain(s) of Marde in Tur 'Abdin where John hid together with other exiled non-Chalcedonian bishops for a couple of years.[44] Severus of Antioch congratulates John and the other

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[41] Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Vol. II/2, 26: Severus' anti-Julianist works were already all translated into Syriac in 528. The political implications of this controversy in Egypt became visible when a new patriarch of Alexandria was to be elected in 536, and a Severian and a Julianist candidate tried to receive the popular vote, respectively the acknowledgement of the government in Constantinople. As late as 565 it seems that Justinian became interested in Julianist teaching.

When John, at the end of the *Profession of Faith*, warns his addressees of the Chalcedonians, he states that they "assiduously introduce the new heresy of worshipping the man, those that set up the Council of Chalcedon and the *Tome* of Leo" (fol. 226a). This does not refer to the enforcement of Chalcedon in the patriarchate of Antioch in 519/522, but John's purpose here is to expose the Chalcedonian faith as an innovation in general.

[42] Ps.-Zachariah Rhetor, *Church History* IX.15, Brooks, 115–122 (79-84; Hamilton – Brooks, 246–252). A piece of the text might be missing just before the last paragraph of the supplication, but one would expect a discussion on Julian already earlier in the text.

[43] See above "John's Career: from Monk to Bishop" and below "John of Tella's Ecclesiology"

[44] ܪܘܡܐ might of course also mean "in Rome". As John certainly had not been to Rome, he could have meant "Constantinople", but as he calls "Constantin-

exiled bishops that they "will render the mountain called in the tongue of the country Marde no meaner than the mountain of Horeb, but even more glorious than that." Through the bishops' presence and their pastoral work there, they have according to Severus "appropriated to your mountain the glory of another and holier mountain in Jerusalem, I mean on the cornerstone of Zion, the watch-house that is higher than all the earth."[45]

To locate precisely the "upper countries" and "the islands of the sea", seems more difficult as John's later whereabouts are not known for sure. His first shelter in exile was his former monastery in Callinicum. Then he lived in Marde for a couple of years before travelling to Constantinople in 532/3. He was finally caught in Persia in 537 where he had been several times before. His candidates for ordination apparently came from all over the patriarchate of Antioch since John of Ephesus states that John of Tella searched for able candidates "in every city as far as the [Roman-Persian] frontier, as far as Armenia and Arzun [in Persia], and the lands of the Cappadocians and the sea-coasts [which according to the editor Ernest Brooks refers to Phoenicia Maritima]."[46]

It is otherwise not known that John ordained anyone on "islands of the sea," but it can hardly refer to anything other than the islands in the Aegean Sea as he could have ordained deacons and priests here on his way to Constantinople in 532 or on the way back to the East. Decades later Jacob Baradaeus ordained Qaššiš as bishop on the island of Chios because according to John of Ephesus the island hosted many believers, non-Chalcedonian monks and even bishops from time to time.[47] John of Ephesus remarks that Qaššiš "arrived at Chios, an island of the sea, [coming] from the upper countries."[48] Also here it is not clear what John of Ephesus

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ople" either by its name or the "capital city" (he does so, for example, a few lines below), it is highly unlikely it should be read "Rome".

[45] Severus, *Select Letters* V.14, Brooks, 390 (346f); Brooks translates ܛܘܪܐ with "hill", but mountain seems more fitting for Marde. It is not entirely clear what Severus meant with "the mountain of Marde": it could be the mountain at whose slope Marde lies as well as a specific mountain near Marde (maybe the one above the Syrian Orthodox monastery of Deyrulzafaran), or maybe – as Severus did not know the area at all – in general the rocky and mountainous area around Marde.

[46] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 18, 519.

[47] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 19, 161–163; spelled "Kashish" in Brooks' translation. For Jacob's work see also John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 19, 154–158.

[48] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 19, 161.

meant with "upper countries." It might refer to the Anatolian plateau but this cannot be reconciled with non-Chalcedonian activities we know of. Alternatively, it could be even further east at the Roman-Persian border or beyond. It is, however, probably a rather unspecific term as John of Ephesus credits Qaššiš with travelling for thirteen years through the upper countries, in other words, probably through Asia Minor and some dioceses in the patriarchate of Antioch.

In the case of John of Tella's *Profession of Faith*, "upper countries" could therefore generally refer to the eastern provinces where he ordained deacons and priests. But considering that John undertook missionary and pastoral work on the Aegean islands, it is likely that he did the same while travelling through Asia Minor. Thus it is possible that "upper countries" refers to the mountainous areas of southern Asia Minor which can be regarded as a non-Chalcedonian stronghold at this time.[49] For example, Theosebius, the metropolitan of Ephesus, was called to Constantinople in 519 because he had not accepted Chalcedon.[50] At the beginning of the 540s the non-Chalcedonian bishop John of Hephaestu travelled to (southern) Asia Minor to administer the Eucharist to believers and to ordain priests, while around 542 John of Ephesus started his missionary activities in Caria, Lydia and Phrygia.[51] Also Jacob Baradaeus "fully carrying out the ministry of the priesthood in all the countries from the royal city as far as the seacoast of Lycaonia" in the 540s, probably took that route in order to support existing non-Chalcedonian communities.[52]

It might be that these bishops all followed the footsteps of John of Tella and visited non-Chalcedonian communities which John had instituted

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[49] The best prosopographical work for this question remains Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VIe siècle.*

[50] In form of the papal *libellus*; see *Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum*, Chabot, 18 (Harrak, 51); Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 33f.

[51] Volker Menze, "Johannes von Ephesus und Kaiser Justinian: ein Missionar, sein Patron und eine Heidenmission im Kleinasien des 6. Jahrhunderts", in E. Winter (Hg.), *Vom Euphrat bis zum Bosporus. Kleinasien in der Antike. Festschrift für Elmar Schwertheim zum 65. Geburtstag*, Asia Minor Studien 65, Bonn: Habelt 2008, 451–460.

[52] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 50, in *PO* 19, 155. For Jacob see Bundy, "Jacob Baradaeus. The State of Research, a Review of Sources and a New Approach".

around 532/3.[53] Therefore John must have written the *Profession of Faith* between 533 and 538 after he had established non-Chalcedonian communities on route to Constantinople. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that he wrote the *Profession of Faith* in 533–536 as this was the time of rapprochement between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians.[54] In this period a letter which essentially urges the monks to stay steadfast against the Chalcedonian "heretics" is not impossible but might have been uncalled for. More likely John sent it off in 536/7 while in exile in Persia, after the Council of Constantinople in 536, that finally gave Ephrem of Amida, the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, the chance to hunt down John, Ephrem's *bête noire* as William Wigram put it.[55] Probably shortly before he was caught in 537 John wrote down his *Profession of Faith* for the monks of "his" diocese.

JOHN OF TELLA, THE APOSTLE PAUL, AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

After addressing the monks, John introduces one of his topics, the foundation of the Church. According to Mt 16.18, Christ built his Church on Simon, who was therefore called Peter or Kephas, that is the rock (of the Church).[56] John of Tella is aware of Peter's outstanding role among the apostles, as he mentions the apostle twice (219[b], 221[a]), but in his *Profession of Faith* John argues for a Pauline foundation over any Petrine understanding of the establishment of the Church:

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[53] Brock, "The conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)", and Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 58–67 and 94–101.

[54] Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 186–191.

[55] Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites*, 101.

[56] "Peter" and "Kephas" are respectively the Greek and Aramaic words for rock. For Simon as "Kephas" or "Peter" in the New Testament see Erich Dinkler, "Die Petrus-Rom-Frage", *ThR* 25 (1959), 189-230 and 289-335, here 197f. The article continues in *ThR* 27 (1961), 33–64, and discusses also the complicated issue of Peter being instituted as the rock of the Church and Rome being the see of Peter, a question which has attracted a large scholarly debate among theologians of different denominations.

An evaluation of the roles of Peter and Paul for the early Church is offered by Lothar Wehr, *Petrus und Paulus – Kontrahenten und Partner. Die beiden Apostel im Spiegel des Neuen Testaments, der apostolischen Väter und früher Zeugnisse ihrer Verehrung*, Münster: Aschendorff 1996.

> The wise master-builder, the divine Paul, has laid for us a spiritual foundation which the offences of the heretics are unable to shake. Upon this spiritual foundation everyone may build a heavenly edifice wisely, like a model which one receives as a gift from God […] Except upon the foundation which had been laid down by Paul, whoever tries this his labor is in vain, and beating the air in his stupidity, he departs from making sense.

John refers here to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in which Paul presents himself as the "master-builder" (1 Cor 3.10). After the four Gospels, Paul's letters form the core of the New Testament, and although even Paul called Peter "Kephas", Peter could theologically in no way compete with Paul who remains probably the most influential person of early Christianity.

The person of the apostle Paul as well as his writings had already received the attention of many church fathers before the sixth century, most notable by John Chrysostom in the fourth century.[57] However, in the *Profession of Faith* Paul does not come to the forefront in matters of Christology, but rather when John discusses the foundation of the Church.[58] This may have biographical reasons because although Elias credits Peter once with being the model for John and giving him an impulse to start his underground work for the non-Chalcedonian cause,[59] the key figure in John's life was Paul.[60] Elias refers to Paul as John's motive for giving his life to the service of the Church. Elias explicitly mentions that John one day picked up the *Acts of Thecla* and immediately "he took the book of the blessed Apostle and started to read it diligently, and like the blessed Thecla, he became the

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[57] Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2000, passim; compare also the impression Paul made on Augustine, *Confessions* VII.21, or the quarrel between Augustine and Jerome about Gal 2.11–14; see Carolinne White, *The Correspondence (394–419) between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo*, Lewiston etc.: Edwin Mellen Press 1990.

[58] For John's Cyrillian Christology see above "John's Christology". For Paul and Christology see Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology. An Exegetical-Theological Study*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers 2007.

[59] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 58 (Ghanem, 68), referring to Jn 21.15–17.

[60] The scholarly literature to Paul is massive; for a short introduction to his missionary activities and theology see Hans Hübner, "Paulus I", in *TRE* 26 (1996), 133–153; for Paul's influence on the Church Fathers in the East up to John Chrysostom see Ernst Dassmann, "Zum Paulusverständnis in der östlichen Kirche", *JbAC* 26 (1989), 27–39.

disciple of the holy Apostle."[61] Paul's canonical letters – Elias quotes from Romans, 2 Timothy and Galatians – are also presented as the reason why John renounced the world and decided to become a monk. [62] Furthermore, in 519, when John is called to the see of Tella, Paul is named as the reason why John first decided to escape from this duty.[63] As bishop, awaiting the imperial edict to accept Chalcedon, John reminded his flock of Paul's command to be of "'one soul and one mind.'"[64] When already in exile, it was again Paul whose first letter to Timothy Elias quotes in order to explain John's motivation to start ordaining a counter hierarchy: "'Bear up the sufferings for the Gospel in the power of God'" and "'Do the work of an evangelist.'"[65] According to Elias, Paul also stayed on John's mind when the former bishop of Tella ordained priests and deacons, and John gave them words of advice from Paul's letters which Elias quoted extensively.[66]

Elias obviously intended to present John as a true follower of Paul, "the apostle" as he sometimes plainly refers to him. Nevertheless, the parallels to John's own insistence on the Pauline foundation of his (and the non-Chalcedonians') works are striking. Also in his *Canons*, John refers several times to "the blessed apostle."[67] It can hardly be doubted that John very much regarded himself following Paul's commands, and he probably also saw in Paul his biblical alter ego. Like Paul, John had to strive against a deplorable state of ecclesiastical affairs within his own communities (as visible in John's *Canons*); like Paul, he regarded himself as on a mission to (re)establish the Church from the ground; and like Paul, John became an enemy of the public order and was arrested by the Roman state.

John does not just quote Paul as the "wise master-builder" from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, but rather the ideology of this letter shines through in John's argument about what the Church is.[68] As the Christians in

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[61] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 42 (Ghanem, 52).

[62] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 44f (Ghanem, 54f).

[63] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 51–53 (Ghanem, 61–63).

[64] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 55 (Ghanem, 65), referring to Phil 2.2.

[65] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 58 (Ghanem, 68f), referring to 2 Tim 1.8 and 4.5.

[66] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 64 (Ghanem, 74f).

[67] In canons 4, 9, 11 15, 24, 26: *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, Vööbus, 147, 149-151, 153, 155f (Trans. 144, 146f, 149-151). In Canon 5 John, however, also refers to Peter as "the prince of the apostles".

[68] John's conclusions about Paul's letter are strikingly different from, for example, Cyprian of Carthage's (248/9-258) readings of this letter which focused on 1

Paul's letter should be an assembly of saints who opposed the "world", in the same way did John perceive the non-Chalcedonian communities who had to face not a pagan but a heretical "world".[69] "Upon this foundation [=Christ] the saints built sainthood, and the virgins their chastity, and the ascetics their abstention from various foods and from the drinking of wine, and those who fast the endurance for their fasts, and those who keep vigils the emaciation of their bodies" (220[a]). Like the Pauline community, the non-Chalcedonians should maintain their "holiness", that is, their correct Christological belief and their independent church life against imperial threats. John therefore seems to have taken the Pauline Church in Corinth as his model when he thought of the Church of his days.

At the same time the image of the Pauline Church also challenged the understanding of the Church as laid out in Pope Hormisdas' *libellus*. Pope Hormisdas (514–523) had drawn up his *libellus* in 515 but did not succeed in implementing it in the East until the emperor Anastasius (491–518) died and Justin I (518–527) ascended the throne.[70] The *libellus* claims apostolicity exclusively for the see of Rome. Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch are named, but Hormisdas speaks only of one "apostolic see", meaning Rome, without specifying it further. In order to do so, he let the *libellus* begin with Mt 16.18: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church". In other words, since Rome was regarded as the see of Peter, on Rome (that is the papacy) the Church was built. Based on this ideological foundation, the *libellus* claims not only the papacy to be in the apostolic succession since the time of the apostles but also to be instituted

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Cor 10 and 12 (the Church as the body of Christ). Cyprian misinterpreted these passages according to Peter Plank, *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche. Zur Entstehung und Entfaltung der eucharistischen Ekklesiologie Nikolaj Afanas'evs (1893–1966)*, Würzburg 1980, 54–56. See also below "John of Tella's Ecclesiology".

[69] For such an understanding of the Pauline letter see Richard A. Horsley, "1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society", in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. R.A. Horsley, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International 1997, 242–252. For the Corinthian letters see also the collection of studies in *Christianity in Corinth. The Quest for the Pauline Church*, ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2004.

[70] For the *libellus* see Haacke, *Die Glaubensformel des Papstes Hormisdas im Acacianischen Schisma*; for the historical context see also Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 58–94.

by Christ himself according to the New Testament.[71] Since the beginnings the papacy has kept the orthodox faith immaculate, and, in contrast, the *libellus* argues, to the other patriarchates in the East: Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, had elected patriarchs in the past who had gone astray into heresy. Therefore the *libellus* required that all bishops in the East needed to subscribe to the *libellus* and have it sent back to Rome. That such a full scale submission did not find receptive ears in the East is obvious as many easterners, both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, neither wholeheartedly agreed with Pope Leo's *Tome* nor did they accept Rome's damnation of Constantinopolitan patriarchs in the time of the Acacian schism (484–519). As discussed above, when John was confronted with the question whether he should sign the *libellus* or leave his see, he chose exile in 521/2.

Considering the fact that this *libellus* erased from the religious landscape the non-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical hierarchy that existed under Anastasius, and made John a refugee for the rest of his life, it seems to be a fair assumption that its ideological justification stayed on John's mind and challenged him to re-think the traditional late antique perception of the Church. This is particularly true because the papal perception of the Church as laid out in the *libellus* was enforced by the state, and thereby created a Chalcedonian imperial church in East and West based on the communion established between all (Chalcedonian) patriarchs and bishops in residence (with the notable exception of Egypt). In other words, it is not surprising that John felt compelled to reply to an image of the Church that supported papal and imperial claims for orthodoxy and rule while simultaneously excluding the non-Chalcedonians.

John challenged it in his *Profession of Faith* by establishing a Pauline counter-image which not only refuted the Christological heresy of the Chalcedonians but also undermined the ideological claim for its apostolic foun-

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[71] For the early history of that claim see Erich Caspar, "Primatus Petri. Eine philologisch-historische Untersuchung über die Ursprünge der Primatslehre", *ZSRG.K* 16 (1927), especially 283f, 300–309, and 322–331. For a short sketch of the development of the papal primacy see Carl Andresen, "Die Legitimierung des römischen Primatsanspruchs in der Alten Kirche", in Georg Denzler (Ed.), *Das Papsttum in der Diskussion*, Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet 1974, 36–52; an overview concerning the papacy and the East is offered by Franz Dvornik, *Byzanz und der römische Primat*, Stuttgart: Schwabenverlag 1966. See also Dinkler, "Die Petrus-Rom-Frage".

dation.[72] This was especially the case because not only did the *libellus* claim Peter as the rock and foundation of the Church from a Roman, papal perspective, but Pope Leo had already done so in his *Tome*. More than any bishop of Rome before him, Leo laid the ideological foundation of the papacy for centuries to come, arguing from Mt 16.18 and 16.19 which concludes that Christ gave Peter the keys for the heavenly kingdom. Probably since the time of Leo, the popes started to make artefacts which present Peter on a throne holding a key as a symbol of the papacy's claim on jurisdictional primacy in the Church.[73] Just as Peter, who was instituted by Christ, ruled over the apostles, so the popes were supposed to be the head of the Church to which all bishops had to look up. The apostle Peter acts through the popes because they are Peter's vicars.[74] Therefore, by refuting the ideological foundation of the *libellus*, which of course also referred to the *Tome* of Pope Leo,[75] John simultaneously shook the foundation of the (western) Chalcedonian claim that the papacy had the right to rule on dogmatic issues like the Christological beliefs of the Church.

However, John faced a major obstacle in advancing this argument. The gospel of Matthew was not only canonical, but this passage on the rock of

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[72] It has been argued that already Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians attempted to refute the primacy of Peter; see Philipp Vielhauer, "Paulus und die Kephaspartei in Korinth", *NTS* 21 (1975), 341-352 but this has not found general approval; see Christian Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2nd edition 2000, 71f.

[73] Benjamin Fourlas, "Eine Statuette des Apostelfürsten Petrus", in S. Hodak, D. Korol, P. Maser, *Zeugnisse spätantiken und frühchristlichen Lebens im römischen Reich*, Oberhausen: Athena 2005, 66-72.

[74] Erich Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, Vol. 1, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1930, 427-431. Walter Ullman, "Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy", *JThS* 11 (1960), 25-51. For the development of Rome as the apostolic see of Peter see also Caspar, "Primatus Petri", 253–331. Until the third century the list of bishops of Rome began with the apostolic founders "Peter and Paul" and then the enumeration of bishops began with the first bishop "Linus" (273f). For the veneration of both Peter and Paul in Rome see Henry Chadwick, "St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome: The Problem of the Memoria Apostolorum ad Catacumbas", *JThS* N.S. 8 (1957), 31–52; for the iconographic representation see Angela Donati (ed.), *Pietro e Paolo. La storia, il culto, la memoria nei primi secoli*, Milan: Electa 2000; see also Dinkler, "Die Petrus-Rom-Frage", 218–230 and Wehr, *Petrus und Paulus – Kontrahenten und Partner*, 357–375.

[75] The *libellus* actually refers to the *epistolae* of Leo in general, but the so-called *Tome* was certainly the most important among them.

the Church had already before 518 made its way into ecclesiological discussions among non-Chalcedonians. Severus of Antioch valued the Petrine foundation of the Christian Church before he was expelled from the see of Antioch – another see that claimed to be the see of Peter.[76] Severus points out Peter's role as the founder of the "apostolic church" of Antioch, the first Christian church overall which makes it the "mother of the eastern churches."[77] The patriarch of Antioch obviously did not argue for a Petrine foundation of the Church in the papal perception, but the fact that the image of Mt 16.18 was widely accepted among non-Chalcedonians made it more difficult for John to demonstrate an alternate biblical foundation of the Church.[78]

In contrast to other non-Chalcedonians John disregarded Rome completely while even Simeon of Beth Aršam mentions "the apostles in Rome"[79]. However, John could not dismiss or ignore the apostle Peter's role for the Church. Therefore John positions the non-Chalcedonians as

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[76] Severus of Antioch, *Homily* 61; *Les Homiliae Cathedrales 57–69*, ed. and trans. M. Brière, in *PO* 8, Paris: Firmin-Didot 1912, 261f. See also Wilhelm de Vries, *Der Kirchenbegriff der von Rom getrennten Syrer*, Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum 1955, 8f. According to Severus, Peter can be regarded the rock of the Church because he is of orthodox belief; see de Vries, *Der Kirchenbegriff der von Rom getrennten Syrer*, 24f.

[77] Severus of Antioch, *Homily* 56; *Les Homiliae Cathedrales 52–57*, ed. R. Duval, in *PO* 4, Paris: Firmin-Didot 1908, 77 and 80; see also Wilhelm de Vries, "Primat, Communio und Kirche bei den frühen syrischen Monophysiten", *OCP* 18 (1952), 52–88, here 57f.

[78] Already Philoxenus of Mabbug and Zachariah Rhetor employed the image of Peter as the rock of the Church; see Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 89f. See also *Life of Peter the Iberian* 5 (*John Rufus: The* Lives *of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem and the Monk Romanus*, ed. and trans. by C. B. Horn and Robert R. Phenix, Jr., Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008, 6f): Peter the Iberian was named Peter because according to the *Life*'s author God planned to establish Peter as the leader of the non-Chalcedonians like the biblical Peter had been the rock of the Church and the chief of the apostles; Cornelia B. Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine. The Career of Peter the Iberian*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 50. For Peter as the foundation of the Church see also de Vries, *Der Kirchenbegriff der von Rom getrennten Syrer*, 26 and de Vries, "Primat, Communio und Kirche bei den frühen syrischen Monophysiten", 59f.

[79] Simeon of Beth Aršam, *Letter on Barsauma, the Bishop of Nisibis, and the Heresy of the Nestorians*, in *BO* I, 347.

being part of "apostolic Church of the house of Simon [=Peter]" (221[a]). Also the papal model had incorporated both New Testament protagonists into its own tradition: although referring to Peter as ideological foundation of the primacy of Rome, Paul was most of the time venerated together with Peter as apostolic founder of the see of Rome.[80] John, however, does not call Simon here Peter or Kephas, and credits him in this way of being the rock of the Church.[81] John dismisses the model of a Church based on apostolic sees because in one way or the other they would all be based on the Petrine foundation of Mt 16.18.[82] The claim to the apostolic succession of episcopal sees had become a matter of fierce politics in the Roman Empire and the history of the sixth century demonstrates that patriarchs in the East, the popes in the West, and the emperors in Constantinople often competed with each other in order to enthrone their candidates in prestigious sees. Their competition presented a struggle for influence – political as well as theological – but by acting this way, they silently agreed to work on the same ecclesiastical model of the Church. By opposing the papal model, John implicitly also opposed the imperial Eusebian model of the Church which gave the emperor the role of the protector of the Church.[83] For the non-Chalcedonians, however, the Roman state presented itself as a hostile environment like the pagan Roman state for the Pauline communities. By arguing that the Church was built on a Pauline foundation, John takes away Hormisdas' justification for defining the orthodox faith, and instead introduces the non-Chalcedonian communities as building on the apostolic foundation and retaining the orthodox faith since the incarnation of Christ.

Decades after John of Tella, Jacob Baradaeus, who like John travelled as an exiled and itinerant bishop the Near East and ordained a Syrian Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy, referred to the apostle Paul in order to de-

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[80] Ruth Wilkins Sullivan, "Saints Peter and Paul: Some Ironic Aspects of their Imaging", *Art History* 17.1 (1994), 59-80; see also Donati, *Pietro e Paolo. La storia, il culto, la memoria nei primi secoli.*

[81] Although John is aware of this name as he calls him Peter at the beginning of the *Profession of Faith* (219[b]).

[82] Pope Damasus I (366–384) also pointed out that Rome could claim primacy not only because of Mt 16.18 but also because Peter and Paul died there as martyrs; see Chadwick, "St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome", 49.

[83] See also below "John of Tella's Ecclesiology".

fine the Church.[84] As Jacob established a new episcopal hierarchy, he expanded on Paul's image of the Church as the house of the living God (see 1 Tim 3.15) and the body of Christ (see 1 Cor 12.27), pointing out the importance of the bishops as the roof of this house. This demonstrates that John, and maybe a few other exiled non-Chalcedonians, developed a different understanding of the Church based on Paul which opposed the traditional focus on apostolic sees, and thereby justified the establishment of a church in exile against the ruling church of the empire.[85]

JOHN OF TELLA'S ECCLESIOLOGY

This image of the biblical foundation fits with John's understanding of the Church in his time.[86] The Chalcedonian church had just overcome the Acacian schism and could therefore claim to be the universal Church both in West and East. The fact that Egypt did not have a Chalcedonian patriarch in Alexandria until 537 could be regarded as a local schism like Donatism had been in fourth-century Africa. Accepting the claim of the ruling Chalcedonian church to be the universal Church would mean that John either hoped to be in power again soon – and then as a part of the ruling non-Chalcedonian church make the same claims – or that he did not take his duty as bishop of the one apostolic Church seriously. The latter can be ruled out as John of Ephesus quotes: "I [John of Tella] for my part have received a gift [his episcopal office] from God, and with it I am trading and

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[84] Jacob Baradaeus, *Letter*, in *Documenta ad Origines Monophysitarum Illustrandas*, ed. and trans. Jean-Baptiste Chabot, CSCO 17/103, Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae and Leuven: E Typographeo Marcelli Istas 1907/1933, 125 (87).

[85] At least temporarily; medieval Syrian Orthodox authors draw again on the four apostolic sees Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople in order to delineate the foundation of the Church (regarding two of them, Rome and Constantinople, as heretical after Chalcedon, and two of them, Alexandria and especially Antioch, as orthodox), but the historical situation for the Syrian Orthodox Church had at that point completely changed. Therefore the analysis of de Vries, *Der Kirchenbegriff der von Rom getrennten Syrer*, about the primacy of Peter needs to be re-evaluated: not only because he is pre-occupied with Peter from a Catholic perspective but also because he does not distinguishes between non-Chalcedonian witnesses before the sixth century persecutions, authors like John or Jacob who wrote while in exile, and medieval Syrian Orthodox writers.

[86] For a more substantial version of what follows see Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 80-89.

am not negligent."[87] John's mass ordinations of priests and deacons confirm this statement.

The other option certainly plays a role among the non-Chalcedonians as religious policy in the Later Roman Empire had sometimes been fickle. The fate of the so called "Arians" (who were not all followers of the abovementioned presbyter Arius, but labeled so by their opponents) who had been in power in the fourth century until they were overthrown by the Nicenes, might have presented the prime example the non-Chalcedonians hoped for.[88] Therefore many non-Chalcedonians probably did not think about ecclesiology itself. They did not change their perception of what the Church was but hoped that the religious policy would change so that at some point they would become once more a part of the imperial church. However, when John wrote this *Profession of Faith* after 15 years of exile, at a time when he was about to be caught by the Chalcedonians, such a vision was unlikely to have been on his horizon.

Already very early in his exile, John's strategy was not to compete with the Chalcedonians for sees by ordaining non-Chalcedonian bishops who would not have even been able to occupy their sees anyway. Neither did he seek the emperor's favor as he made clear in the discussions of 532/3 when he refused Justinian's request to stop ordinations (of Chalcedonians). Instead, by ordaining thousands of priests and deacons he flooded the Chalcedonian dioceses with clerics who could administer the sacraments, and probably quite rapidly took over the sacramental church life in some of the eastern provinces.

John thereby deliberately overruled long established church canons which did not allow an outside bishop to ordain clerics for other dioceses – except in times of persecutions. However, even then it was expected that the bishop would undertake this clandestine ordination in order to fulfil a specific, local need for a priest or deacon. But the dimensions of John's monumental work of ordaining thousands of priests and deacons demonstrate that John hardly wished to assign each of them to a specific altar as

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[87] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in *PO* 18, 520. John refers here to the parable of the talents in Mt 25.14-30: the good servant invests the money that was given to him (Mt 25.16).

[88] The Second Council of Constantinople in 553 certainly made them realize that the Council of Chalcedon itself could no longer be questioned, even if in 553 modifications were introduced that enraged western Chalcedonians.

church law required.[89] It cannot be compared to "underground ordinations" that had been done before in times of persecutions, for example by Nicene bishops in the fourth century when their opponents had been in power. John's mass ordinations were not merely extra-jurisdictional: the scale of ordinations was simply unheard of. John organized a professional recruitment of candidates for the priesthood and deaconate, and wooed away possible Chalcedonian candidates in order to dry up the future of Chalcedonian church life in the eastern dioceses.[90] Thereby John challenged the legitimacy of the imperial church at its heart, the Eucharist communities. Losing control over the Eucharist equalled the loss of the ability to claim to be *the Church*. According to the twentieth-century cardinal Henri de Lubac the Church makes the Eucharist: "it was principally to that end that her [the Church's] priesthood was instituted. 'Do this in memory of me.'"[91]

John of Tella had been part of the imperial church until he left for exile and he certainly knew that ecclesiastical politics often amounted to little more than profane imperial policy. In order to challenge the understanding of *the Church* as the imperial church, which had been the dominant perception of the Church since Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340, bishop 314–340), he needed to look back to the roots of early Christianity before the Church became a matter relevant to imperial politics. The way John perceived the Church opposed the universal ecclesiology which conceives the Church as a hierarchical structured body of all local churches, which were either ruled by the popes in the western European model or by the patriarchs (in combination with church councils and the Roman emperors) in

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[89] For the prohibition of extra-jurisdictional ordinations see the Synod of Antioch (341), can. 22. According to Severus it was allowed to overrule canons in times of persecution if the faithful benefited from it; see Severus' judgment concerning the ordinations of priests by a bishop outside his home diocese: Severus, *Select Letters* I.59, Brooks, 197f (176f).

For the proper assignment of clergy to one altar see the Synod of Antioch, can. 3; especially the Council of Chalcedon forbade in can. 6 clergy to be ordained at large who cannot be appointed to a certain parish church, martyry or monastery. See also Council of Chalcedon, can. 10 and 20.

[90] See also Menze, "The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, his Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile", 86–88.

[91] Henri de Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church*, London: Sheed and Ward 1956, 93; de Lubac's main study on the Eucharist remains *Corpus Mysticum. L'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Age. Étude historique*, Paris: Aubier 1949; see also Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 145–148.

the Eastern Roman model. John's understanding of the Church resembles rather a "Eucharistic ecclesiology", a term introduced in the twentieth century by the Russian Orthodox proto-presbyter and theologian Nikolas Afanassieff (1893–1966).[92]

In exile Afanassieff developed an ecclesiology which was influenced by the schisms of the Russian Orthodox episcopal hierarchy after the Russian revolution. He believed it to be necessary to recover the original model of the universal Church, which he saw in the Eucharistic foundation.[93] The key-sentence of his Eucharistic ecclesiology was Mt 18.20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them". For Afanassieff the Eucharist communities were always the Church and not just part of a bigger whole. Local churches may establish hierarchies between each other, but no church can rule over the other and there cannot be one bishop who rules the Church.[94] He believed that this had been the dominating model in the early church, based on his understanding of Ignatius of Antioch (end of the first/beginning of the second century) who wrote in his letter to the Smyrneans that the congregation is where the bishop is, in a way analogous to the idea that where Christ is, there is "the universal church."[95] Therefore the universal Church manifests itself in the local church; Christ is present where the Eucharist is celebrated.[96]

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[92] For his life and theology see Plank, *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche*, passim. A few of Afanassieff's works are translated into or written in a western language; see especially Nikolas Afanassieff, "The Church which presides in Love", in *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. J. Meyendorff *et al.*, London 1963, 57–110; idem, "Das allgemeine Priestertum in der orthodoxen Kirche", *EHK* 17 (1935), 334–340; and idem, "Una Sancta", *Irénikon* 36 (1963), 436–475. For a very short overview of the Eucharistic ecclesiology in the twentieth century see Paul McPartlan, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology", *OiC* 22 (1986), 314–331; see also idem, *The Eucharist makes the Church. Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1993.

[93] For Afanassieff's understanding of the universal model which he saw developed by Cyprian of Carthage see Afanassieff, "The Church which presides in Love", 59-67; for Cyprian of Carthage and the primacy of Peter see Caspar, "Primatus Petri", 277–323; for Eucharistic ecclesiology see especially Afanassieff, "The Church which presides in Love", 73–81.

[94] Plank, *Die Eucharistieversammlung als Kirche*, 52–54.

[95] Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrneans* VIII.2 (*The Apostolic Fathers* Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Bart D. Ehrman, LCL 24, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2003, 304f).

[96] Afanassieff, "Una Sancta", 459: "là, où est une assemblée eucharistique, là demeure le Christ et là est l'Église de Dieu en Christ."

Like Afanassieff, John also lost his former place within the church, and went into exile because the dogmatic position of the imperial policy changed. With the papal *libellus* the imperial policy targeted the non-Chalcedonian tradition and attempted to erase it from history.[97] The experience of exile and oppression certainly influenced and sharpened John's perception of what the Church should be. The Eucharistic foundation of the Church was not completely forgotten in late antiquity since a Gallic sermon probably dating to the fourth century claims that "the holy community (for the invocation) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is there, where all faithful are supposed to participate in the Lord's days."[98] However, in the sixth century, John was confronted with a church that had fought over sees, influence and power for at least two centuries. By ordaining thousands of priests and deacons and doing "the work of an evangelist" as his biographer Elias wrote,[99] John tried to rebuild church communities which focused on their main purpose, the administering of sacraments necessary for salvation, especially the Eucharist. For John this Church manifested itself in local Eucharistic communities led by priests and deacons he had ordained. They formed together with the exiled non-Chalcedonian bishops an orthodox commonwealth based on the apostolic foundation and legacy which stood in opposition to the imperial church.

These non-Chalcedonian Eucharist communities had been established outside the episcopal churches and Chalcedonian realm, and John's biographer Elias could therefore rightly claim that the Church "was built up" by John in the eastern provinces since according to the Eucharistic ecclesiology the Church is where the Eucharist is consummated.[100] John's Eucharistic communities were bound to him (as he conferred his *sacerdotium* to the priests and deacons he had ordained), but as he had provided them with his written instructions they could operate independently without him being physically present. Ideologically John based his non-Chalcedonian Eucharist communities, which survived even under the conditions of discrimination

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[97] See Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, 58–105.

[98] D.G. Morin, "Notice sur un Manuscrit importat pour l'Histoire du Symbole", *RBen* 14 (1897), 481–488; F.J. Badcock, "*Sanctorum Communio* as an Article in the Creed", *JThS* 21 (1920), 106–126, here 108–110. See also the instructive article by P. Ludovicus Hertling, "Communio und Primat", *MHP* 7 (1943), 1–48, here 10.

[99] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 58 (Ghanem 69) with quotation from 2 Tim 4.5.

[100] Afanassieff, "Das allgemeine Priestertum in der orthodoxen Kirche", 337: "Die Kirche ist eben dort, wo die Eucharistie vollzogen wird."

and persecution, on the Pauline understanding of the Church as laid out in the *Profession of Faith*. Just as Paul had built his Corinthian assembly as community of saints against the dominant Roman society, so John perceived his communities as the Church that opposed a heretical Roman state.

CONCLUSION: A BISHOP'S SPIRITUAL LEGACY

In his *The Separation of the Monophysites* William Wigram remarks that "some of John's Christological arguments were almost as startling as his natural history."[101] Wigram refers here to John's discussion of the Trinity which – according to John – the Chalcedonians turned into a "quaternity": Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Christ as man:

> We accept only three councils, the one in faith which was the one at Nicaea and those two which were the ones at the capital city and at Ephesus, which they perfected and put the seal upon. Trinity in persons and names, but the nature is one and the power is one. Trinity in the council of the Holy Church, the earthly heaven, and single is the truth which was spoken at those three. There is no quaternity in Heaven on account of the Trinity there, and there is no quaternity in the Church of the apostles which is glorified in Trinity. (fol. 221[a])

Christian pseudo-rational arguments about numbers had already come up long before John, and the argument that the Chalcedonians worshipped a quaternity was not completely new either. Already in the time before the Council of Chalcedon, the dyophysites were accused of separating the Son into two: "One is he who is without beginning, another he who is subject to beginning. One is he who is from the Father, another he who is from the virgin."[102] After Chalcedon, Philoxenus, the non-Chalcedonian metropolitan of Mabbug (485–521), raised this issue and spoke not only of a fourth hypostasis, but also of a "quaternity".[103] However, John's conclusion that a

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[101] Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites*, 103.

[102] This is the accusation brought up against the dyophysite bishop Ibas of Edessa at the Second Council of Ephesus; *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449*, Flemming, 44 (English translation taken from *Stewards of the Poor. The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth Century Edessa*, trans. Robert Doran, CS 208, Kalamazoo/MI: Cistercian Publications 2006, 166f).

[103] Philoxenus, *Memre against Habib V and X*, in *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis Dissertationes decem de Uno e Sancta Trinitate incorporato et passo*, ed. and trans. Maurice Brière and François Graffin, in *PO* 38 and 40, Turnhout: Brepols 1976–80,

heavenly Trinity would allow only for three ecumenical earthly church councils seems to be as extravagant as it is unique. It is somewhat ironic that it was only with the "fourth" council, Chalcedon, that the three former councils became actually canonized as such. Until the Second Council of Ephesus in 449, the church fathers referred only to Nicaea and the First Council of Ephesus as ecumenical. The first time that the Council of Constantinople in 381 was accepted as the "second council" was at Chalcedon.[104]

In the West the First Council of Constantinople did not receive its full ecumenical status until 591 with the famous statement of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) who, like the popes before him, was reluctant to accept the ecumenical status of the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 and argued:

> I receive and revere, as the four books of the Gospel so also the four Councils […] since on them as on a four-square stone rises the structure of the holy faith; and whosoever, of whatever life and behaviour he may be, holds not fast to their solidity, even though he is seen to be a stone, yet he lies outside the building.[105]

Immediately afterwards, in this letter to the eastern patriarchs, Gregory is, however, prepared to accept the Second Council of Constantinople which is regarded the fifth ecumenical council by western (Latin and Greek) Christendom. But besides the different – and for the secular reader random – points of reference like Trinity or the four canonical Gospels for defending the number of ecumenical councils, John's and Gregory's argument about the councils follow the same lines: the church councils are cornerstones of orthodoxy, which obviously – according to how many one ac-

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560f and 282–285; see also David Michelson, *Practice leads to Theory: Orthodoxy and Spiritual Struggle in the World of Philoxenos of Mabbug (470–523)*, Princeton PhD Thesis 2007, 131–133.

[104] Adolf Martin Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein Symbol. Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des II. Ökumenischen Konzils*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1965, 213–216 who points out (216) that already Palestinian monks draw the parallel of the four ecumenical Councils to the four canonical Gospels in 516.

[105] Gregory the Great, *ep.* I.24 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 12. *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe and James Barmby, Christian Literature Publishing Company 1895, 81f). For an explanation why there can only be four gospels see the already mentioned work by Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* III.11.8.

cepts – leads John and Gregory to different interpretations of who was orthodox.

Like Gregory, John regards the Church as a building, but the parallels of what the Church is end here. In contrast to the papal perception of the past which became the predominant view for the Middle Ages in Europe, John did not establish a linear apostolic succession of a see as the papacy did. The Christian landscape in the Eastern Roman Empire had always been more diverse than the West, and never grouped around a single see as it was in the late antique West with the dominating see of Rome. Even irrespective of the fact that the history of the papacy was not as immaculate as the popes of the sixth century claimed, an exiled non-Chalcedonian like John was hardly prepared to value the ecclesiastical justification for claiming such a role for any episcopal see.

John presents a Pauline and Eucharistic understanding of the Church which he combines with a non-Chalcedonian perception of the ecclesiastical past. Christ is the basis upon whom Paul started to build a spiritual foundation as wise master-builder. All following generations of Christians embellished upon this establishment – martyrs through death and triumph, ascetics through emaciation of their bodies, virgins through chastity, etc. – and the church fathers defended the apostolic heritage and the orthodox faith through three ecumenical councils. This Church whose orthodoxy is established through a biblical, apostolic and orthodox patristic past has no room for heterodox thinking, but its orthodox path leads straight to the non-Chalcedonians of the sixth century.

John drew a picture of the Church that gives the laity the appropriate place in this edifice, the place of the Pauline "saints" of the Corinthian community: "Upon it also you [the monks who John addresses] have built, holy ones, because only that can bear your building. Every building which is not built and planted upon this rock is assigned in its pride to be utterly destroyed" (221b). Obviously John might have wished to flatter his addressees as monks easily regarded themselves as guardians of orthodoxy in contrast to the more worldly bishops.[106] But it can hardly be credited to John's flattery only that the laity plays such a role in John's image of the Church. Rather it is the logical conclusion of John's life as an exiled, persecuted and

[106] As the already mentioned correspondence between the non-Chalcedonian bishop Jacob of Sarug and the non-Chalcedonian abbot Lazarus of the Mār Bassus monastery shows: Jacob of Sarug, *Letters* 14–17, in *Epistulae quotquot supersunt*, Olinder, 58–86 (*Les Lettres de Jacques de Saroug*, Albert, 93–128).

condemned bishop that in his understanding of the Church the laity occupies an important place.

The long-established pattern of defining the universal Church as the *oikumene* of local churches through the communion between the episcopal see holders cut off any non-Chalcedonian claim to be part of the Church because the Syrian non-Chalcedonian bishops did not hold any see. Therefore John and the other non-Chalcedonian bishops were unable to define their place within a macrocosmic "Church" through diptychs or synodal letters as bishops had done for centuries.[107] Being excluded from these episcopal privileges and etiquette, John did not take this as a symbol of his heresy, but firmly believed that he and his fellow non-Chalcedonians belonged to the true Church. His opposition to the Council of Chalcedon and church of the state which exiled him predisposed him to believe in episcopal fallibility, but he had faith in the steadfastness of his non-Chalcedonian communities which had no official episcopal hierarchy (except the few bishops in exile that were still alive in 536/7). He did not focus on episcopal succession because the episcopal or patriarchal sees did not form the bases of the Church, instead Eucharist communities did. At the same time John was very much a sixth-century bishop who did not dismiss church history, that is, the church fathers, the three ecumenical councils, and church law. He did not question the general hierarchical structure of clergy for the Christian communities and their administration of sacraments, nor did he argue for a pre- or non-episcopal church because church law had established these hierarchies. Rather, influenced by his struggles, he developed a different ecclesiology – even if not revealed in great detail by the surviving texts – that could justify a church which was persecuted by *the* Christian state of late antiquity.

Leaving aside the strife over episcopal sees which had become a matter of fierce power politics in late antiquity, John's model took its strength referring back to the origins of Christianity. John speaks of himself as having undertaken apostolic work, and his self-depiction here is very much in line with his biographer Elias who praised John as evangelist.[108] In his understanding, he followed and took up the legacy of the apostle Paul because John intended to rebuild the Church through missionary work and canonical instructions.

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[107] Hertling, "Communio und Primat", 11–15.

[108] Elias, *Life of John of Tella*, Brooks 58 (Ghanem 69).

If the hypothesis of the date is correct then the closing sentence "I have written […] that you may also remain the first ones in this zeal for the sake of the faith and I ask that you pray for me" is not just a polite phrase, but makes the *Profession of Faith* John's spiritual legacy. Aware in 536/7 of the fate that awaited him, he asks the monks to pray for his soul and continue his work by remaining part of the non-Chalcedonian ecclesiastical edifice. The Church as John imagined it would survive its fundamental ecclesiastical crisis and be further embellished through their faithful and god-loving ascetic practices. He did not live long enough to see that his underground- and counter-church actually started to take the initiative through the work of John of Ephesus and others who started highly successful non-Chalcedonian missionary activities in Asia Minor and Nubia, and completed the establishment of an ecclesiastical hierarchy by appointing new bishops and patriarchs.

That it was not the imperial church which was in a more comfortable position for these apostolic undertakings, but instead the condemned non-Chalcedonians which started missionary activities might therefore be the logical consequence of John's monumental work. The non-Chalcedonians did not occupy the episcopal sees, but due to John, they were firmly rooted in Eucharist communities and could re-establish a new ecclesiastical structure based on his Pauline understanding of the Church. Thus the later so-called Syrian Orthodox took up John's legacy and followed the path that John of Tella had imagined and paved, even if many among those non-Chalcedonians may not have come to the same conclusions as John regarding ecclesiology.[109]

John's hermeneutic tools and his heresiological argumentations are very similar to other church fathers, but his conclusions about the Church are surprisingly different from contemporary ecclesiological discourses. The ruling model of the universal Church based on apostolic successions of episcopal sees does not play a role in John of Tella's *Profession of Faith*. John became a dangerous opponent of the Christian Roman state not only by establishing a counter-church hierarchy but also by refusing to accept the

[109] John of Ephesus, for example, is much more focused on Constantinople and the Emperor than John of Tella was; see Jan J. van Ginkel, "John of Ephesus on Emperors: The Perception of the Byzantine Empire by a Monophysite", in *VI Symposium Syriacum 1992*, ed. René Lavenant, OCA 247, Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale 1994, 323–333.

Eusebian model of the imperial church to which the emperor adhered.[110] Living in exile, John developed an original ecclesiology that challenged both the papal and the imperial model(s) of the Church, and in combination with his bold deeds of ordaining thousands of non-Chalcedonians as clerics and establishing Eucharist communities, he succeeded in establishing the foundation of an independent Syrian Orthodox Church.

[110] For Justinian and the Church see Hamilcar S. Alivisatos, *Die kirchliche Gesetzgebung des Kaisers Justinian I.*, Berlin: Trowitzsch & Son 1913 [Aalen: Scientia 1973], 60–62 and Claire Sotinel "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century. The Western View", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005, 267–290.

NOTES ON THE EDITION AND TRANSLATION

The folio references follow the format given by William Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* (e.g., |219^{b}|, not |219^{v}|). In the Syriac text, spelling inconsistencies of various proper nouns and Greek loanwords were kept as in the original. In the translation, all personal names are given in their modern English equivalent. In the text, square brackets are used to indicate that the text was (almost) illegible, in the translation brackets are used to interpolate words in order to provide a better reading. However, in general the translation attempts to be as close to the original Syriac as possible.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

THE FAITH OF THE VENERABLE AND HOLY BISHOP OF TELLA

|219b| To the pious and holy monasteries around the city of Constantina[1] and to those in its countryside, true believers and holy limbs set in the true body of Christ, our God, the angels on a spiritual watch against the perfidy of heretics, the enemies of the true shepherd, the herald of truth, the abbots, the priests and deacons, and the brotherhood that loves Christ who is with you.

John by the grace of God bishop, a friend of your elected company, sends much and exceeding salutation in Jesus, the Creator of worlds, the Savior of creatures, the true God from true God, light of those above and of those below, a strong wall within which all the righteous creatures have been enclosed, a great and vast stronghold which was not crushed by the barbarians, a secure tower from the heavenly greatness of which spiritual and bodily considerations have desisted, who was born of the eternal Father before all the creatures which are seen and unseen, who is life and the cause of life and Peace and an Angel of peace.

The wise master-builder, the divine Paul, has laid for us a spiritual foundation which the offences of the heretics are unable to shake. Upon this spiritual foundation everyone may build a heavenly edifice wisely, like a model which one receives as a gift from God.[2]

And, as if with his forefinger, he demonstrated to us that next to this foundation nobody is able to lay down another. And who is presumptuous to lay down another foundation? Except upon the foundation which had

[1] For the different names of Tella see introduction.

[2] See 1 Cor 3.10.

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been laid down by Paul, whoever tries this his labor is in vain and, beating the air in his stupidity, he departs from making sense.

And he does not become a fellow-worker of the master of the building but an evil enemy who plots the opposite because he does not wish to build the holy building or to raise and spread the apostolic buildings alongside Paul and Peter the wise master builders. And upon this occasion, just as in the word of the blessed Paul, his work will be delivered to a conflagration of fire.[3] And he will emerge without reward after he has laid the foundation and the building within the fire of the blaze.

The foundation is Jesus Christ[4] upon whom the building is built and within whom that building is raised and is made solid. Upon this foundation it stays steadfast. Wise builders from all quarters and all peoples and all languages willingly built upon Him a spiritual practice of their manners of life. (Was this with) gold, silver, and precious stones?[5] For they built with their faith instead of gems, and instead of the silver which one can touch, with hope that is supreme over spiritual entities, and instead of the transient gold, with love of intransient things. Upon this foundation the apostles built the toil |220[a]| of their endurance and their mission towards all the peoples. They also based on this foundation the spiritual doctrine which they had drunk from the fount that had opened on the side of Golgotha and which quenched the destructive thirst of the sinful peoples. For they took from it and built upon it. Upon this foundation the ships of prophecy were brought to rest at a haven of peace. Upon this foundation the holy martyrs built their triumphs and deaths. Upon this foundation the saints built sainthood, and the virgins their chastity, and the ascetics their abstention from various foods and from the drinking of wine, and those who fast the endurance for their fasts, and those who keep vigils the emaciation of their bodies.

Some endure heavy and great thoughts, some others endure powerful

[3] 1 Cor 3.13.
[4] See 1 Cor 3.11.
[5] See 1 Cor 3.12.

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ܡܝܬܐ ,ܡܪܝܐ ܕܩܝܡܬܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܠܐ: ܐܡܪܬܐ ܠܗ
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stresses. Others suffer from standing upon columns, others from clothes of hair, others from girding of skins, others from stroke because of wicked things, others from penitence of (the cutting of) the hair upon their heads. Some bear the dispersal of money, others bear that of gifts towards the indigent. Some practice the visitation of the sick, others the hospitality to strangers. Some bear death for the sake of God and persecution on His account, others bear sufferings and distresses for Him. They all bear these things differently.

Much more than what they can bear, they suffer in truth from those people who have unjustly persecuted them. An end was brought unto the great distinctions and spiritual manners of life of these holy men aiming at spiritual knowledge, i.e., the very foundation which is Christ, and upon which heaven and earth were built.

Like the word of the great teacher Paul: "Everybody built upon it like them in order to have power, and they slept in their expectation of recompense in order to receive a wage for their labors."[6] What is it upon which their buildings were built? O Holy ones, the love of this foundation brought you also out of this world which is an unstable building, and you are to be built upon this foundation. And when you saw that earthquakes shake and tremble the walls of the world, and that it was swaying hither and thither and was about to be uprooted, the foundation carried you by means of the aid from God.

And upon this undestroyed and untransformed foundation which would (otherwise) lead to catastrophe, you have solemnly built your lives.

[6] See 1 Cor 3.14.

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When all of you spread on it, you are pleasing to sight, like beautiful pearls, fine gems, pure gold and true silver. And you are members in this edifice which was built upon this foundation. For you have left behind the visible and material world. And this was done wisely by you when one makes a judgment regarding you, that you have set out into the desire of the invisible world.

And you have |220b| prudently restrained your bodies with your spirits from the luxury of vain food. In the expectation of those heavenly things which are non-existent in these excrements, you have maintained the love of this foundation. It made you strangers to your natural parents and to the beloved ones in the family, and separate from your lineage.

You built your faith upon this foundation like pearls and beautiful gems and your patience like pure and proven silver and your love in Christ like pure gold. For you are like the divine apostle in spirit from God. And you discern rightly after the example of that wise master-builder the permanent things which are three: Faith, hope, love.[7] I know that these are those three things that are, by the help of God, completely with you.

For three things are desired by those who seek to be pleasing to God. None of these can stay within any person without the other two. No faith without hope or love, no hope without love or faith, and no love without faith or hope. Each is joined to the other. Like the spirit and the mind in the body and light in the eyes, and splendor and flashing of light in the sphere of the sun. And like the blaze and the fervent heat in the amber.

[7] See 1 Cor 13.13.

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Without these three, it is not possible to become a bond-servant to Christ. Without these three nobody may see God face to face. Without these three nobody may become a partaker in the holy and formidable mysteries. Without these three nobody may proceed on the track which leads to the kingdom of heaven. For they are rooms within which the spirit will pass. And advancing so to arrive upon a great street which reaches the city of the great king. But the spirit which does not pass from these is left outside the portal.

Which person who has this key, the three wards[8] which do not err, will not be able to open the bolt set at the gate of the kingdom of God's household? The gate of the entrance which leads to the place which is above variations may be opened with three keys: With faith, hope and love.

The baptism of the spirit in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is perfected in the Trinity. So was the truth of the church perfected in three ecumenical councils. They are the one with the 318 pious and holy fathers who gathered in the city of Nicaea in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and which condemned Arius and Eunomius; and that of the 150 which was convened at Constantinople which rejected Macedonius and Apollinaris; |221[a]| and that of the 220 bishops and holy men convened at Ephesus of Asia which deposed from the apostolic see the impious Nestorius. These are the ones which proclaim the truth to the whole world and another council in the church is not acceptable. There is no room for quaternity, for there is no quaternity in Heaven. Because we learnt only a Trinity which is the essence in the terms and concepts of "faith, hope and love" which were held by the sons of the Catholic Church. The apostolic Church of the house

[8] Oxford English Dictionary: *ward* 24. a. Each of the ridges projecting from the inside plate of a lock, serving to prevent the passage of any key the bit of which is not provided with incisions of corresponding form and size. b. Each of the incisions in the bit of a key, corresponding to the 'wards' of the lock. In untechnical (literary and popular) use these applications are sometimes reversed, the word being taken to denote the cavities of the lock or the solid parts of the key.

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of Simon[9] has accepted these three councils only. It accepted in faith the one which was sacredly convened in Nicaea, and in true hope the one in the capital city, and in spiritual love the one at Ephesus. These were the daughters of the single will and which were to the Holy Church a whole body, first like a mind, second like a spirit, and third like a body.

There is the one at Nicaea the famous one of the church through faith, the one in Constantinople like light, and the one in Ephesus like splendor. They are three in number, and they are single in the agreement of faith. First, in Nicaea, the faith was preached which was the sun of the spirits which were deemed worthy of "the life of my soul"[10], through baptism. The Council at Constantinople finished it and put a seal upon those things which were spoken by it. The holy one at Ephesus had been convened, when it completed the one at Nicaea of the 318 fathers and accepted the revered and unblemished faith which was pronounced in their divine assemblies. It put a seal upon it with the 150 fathers of the one at the capital city and the ones at Ephesus placed a canon in which was thus: "Anyone who dares and strives to declare or commit another definition of faith outside the one which had been sealed by the 318 holy fathers and with the Holy Spirit at Nicaea, let him be under anathema."[11]

We accept only three councils, the one in faith which was the one at Nicaea and those two which were the ones at the capital city and at

[9] I.e., the apostle Peter.
[10] Isa 38.16, meaning uncertain.
[11] Council of Ephesus, can. 7.

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Ephesus, which they perfected and put the seal upon. Trinity in persons and names, but the nature is one and the power is one. Trinity in the council of the Holy Church, the earthly heaven, and single is the truth which was spoken at those three. There is no quaternity in Heaven on account of the Trinity there, and there is no quaternity in the Church of the apostles which is glorified in Trinity. |221b|

There is no confusion nor any place or room for the Council of Chalcedon in the Church of God. The fourth Council of Chalcedon is superfluous, accursed and an anathema. The three proclaim the Trinity, the fourth proclaims a quaternity. Where there is quaternity you will accept quaternity. But where the Trinity is preached, only the Three are accepted. There is no quaternity in Trinity which the apostleship preached as Trinity. The Council of Chalcedon disgraced the Father as having two Sons and it introduced a quaternity. It is an anathema and a rejection from the church which preaches the truth. The Council of Chalcedon built not upon the foundation which the divine master-builder Paul had laid, but upon the sand[12] which Nestorius, the confounder and the destroyer, had laid. The council has come, so that his ruin may be built. The council has loved the foolishness of that abhorred person; and an anathema is the only thing he receives (as) a fee for his building from the lovers of truth.

This is the holy Council of Nicaea, this the cohort of the sons of light, this the heavenly army, this the spirit of the world, whose resolving was in the exalted Trinity. And their building was shining forth sacredly, the light of the sun of justice in the luminous and spiritual eye which is pure and strained from the filth of the heretics and it (i.e., the council) gazed and looked wisely where to build its building.

[12] See Mt 7.26.

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And the divine Paul, wise among the spiritual master-builders, invoked them and demonstrated to them the true foundation and the unshakeable rock upon which they would place and build their building. And he said these things to them when he said: "Another foundation apart from this one, which is Jesus Christ, you will not lay."

Upon this built Simon and John, upon this Thomas completed (his mission) in Ethiopia. And in Egypt Mark built upon it, and Addai (in) the land of the Medians, of the Persians, and of the Parthians, and in Palestine, the apostle Matthew and James, the brother of our Lord, built upon it. Upon it also I built and finished it in the high place and in the upper countries and on the islands of the sea. Upon it also you have built, holy ones, because only that can bear your building. Every building which is not built and planted upon this rock is assigned in its pride to be utterly destroyed. Upon this very foundation those holy ones placed their building by means of the Holy Spirit.

And when the others, the 150, convened at the capital city and saw that this building was built beautifully and wisely they also built upon it; so did |222[a]| the ones at Ephesus. The 220 convened and saw that the building was perfect and no longer required addition and would not admit innovation nor would be subject to decrease. They wisely placed an anathema upon it so that no one would dare to add to it or to subtract from it. Therefore we also are, holy ones, the sons of those fathers and their disciples. And we are proceeding on their tracks and we drink from that spring of water, the life which streams within the Cross, from the well which Wisdom opened for the thirsty ones. And from this river which parted itself from Golgotha; a divine Eden.

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And we arrange into four headings: life, heavenly teaching, this Holy Trinity and the revered Essence. We profess that it is: Three persons and three names, one nature and one power, one action, one command, one working, one dominion, one glory, one magnificence, one kingdom, one lordship, one godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is not that the one gives the order and the two are commanded. It is not that the one sits and the two stand. It is not that the one sends forth and the two are sent out. It is not that the one abides and the two tie and untie. But three of them are one glory. Upon a high and sublime seat, all three of them in one agreement, and one command which stretches without delay to all three of them in one will, and one sign of a delegation to all three of them in one harmony.

From this eternal essence the Father sent his Son – when He wished – in the soundness of the Holy Spirit. And He went forth from the sacred Holy of Holies of his Godhead and revealed the non-heavenly part of his essence and descended from a place of invisibility. And he set forth the manifestation from his concealment so that He would arrive at where He was. And he descended in an indescribable way. He was born without a beginning and the Son of the Supreme One started in the womb of the Virgin. And He became a baby in the womb but He remained hidden within the womb of flesh infinitely. The sun of justice put on a body from the Virgin consubstantial with the Father and became a man without a transformation, simple and spiritual.

A sea of light was born from the dim womb. And from the Blessed Mary, from her nature, from her flesh and from her bones He took form and put on a flesh and adopted breath, but not in a way that He received any augmentation. But although He was spiritual, He became corporeal, even though He was simple because He was God. He was formed from

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within |222[b]| the flesh because He became a man, even though He is indefinable together with His Father everywhere as proper to God.

He was bound corporeally because He became corporeal. Although the Creation is carried by His power as the Creator, the knees of the Maiden carried Him because He was an infant. And although the Heaven and earth got filled with Him—as He was an infinite being—He started in a dark cave because He became flesh. Although He was not in need but (rather) was a nourisher, He sucked milk from the breasts of the Virgin because He willed to become like us.

And in all of these things, He was one, not two. On account of the fact (on the one hand) that He was born from the eternal Father before everything, but that He found a physical beginning from the Virgin, and (on the other hand) that He dawned from the womb of essence in an indescribable way, but that He was born from a womb of flesh—which was also a wonder, and above explanation—He had two births but He was not two. The Scriptures have preached two beginnings concerning him. He however was not divided into two, as into one from ever before, and one from the present; one of no beginning, and one of an inferior beginning; one from the Essence, and one from the Virgin; one of Divinity, and one of Humanity; one superior, and one inferior; one heavenly and one earthly; one of the two through the Essence without a beginning, but through Humanity subject to a beginning; through the superior, superior, and through the inferior, inferior; through the heavenly, heavenly, and through the earthly, earthly.

He who cannot be divided or separated is not two things. The birth of the one from heaven cannot be comprehended or explained through heaven, and the manifestation of His turning into a human from the lowly things cannot be told or examined through earth. It is not that He was next to a twofold Father, and next to a simple mother. For He is simply with His Father even if here He seemed to be made because He had become a man.

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It is not that half of Him was with the Father and then came from Him unto the Virgin, but all of Him is with the Father on account of the fact that He is God, and all of Him was with the Virgin, because He was man. It is not that He was one (thing) in Heaven and another upon Earth. But all of Him is in Heaven because He is God and all of Him is among the people upon earth because He became man.

And in each place, we profess Him to be one. With the Father and from the Virgin, because He was born in the excellencies of sanctity above spiritual multitudes, |223[a]| and before all the creatures and because He was born in the latter times from the seed of Abraham and David, from the womb of flesh, and at the summit and profundity and because He was not seen and then He was One who was seen, and because He was not corporeal and then He put on a body; from the two He was one; from both of the two He was, when He was; and He was one when He was from both of the two, the Divinity and the Humanity.

We profess a natural and substantial union, but not of honor and conjunction. And concerning this, we anathematize those who impiously preach a union of glory and of conjunction, we profess a union that has become from Divinity and from humanity. It is not that the union was established when the natures from them were transformed. And again it was not that when they were confounded. It was not when the nature of Divinity was transformed into flesh or when the nature of humanity was transformed into Divinity that, we say, the union occurred, but the single nature of the living Word which became incarnate and put on a body from the Virgin. In nature and by means of hypostasis, without a change and without confusion, and not through an illusion or imagination, and not in a hallucination, did the union of the Son incarnate happen.

When He became like us, however, in everything except sin and remained one incarnate nature without alteration and without division, (He was) God and human and immortal and also one who willingly died, when

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He saved us. For we profess that He who died for our sake was not mortal, beloved ones of God. For, through the death of a mortal, human salvation is not granted to mortals. Destruction is not rendered void through perishability.

We profess on account of this and this is the true doctrine for us that, although not mortal, He died for us, (and) that because He was not mortal in His nature, He will break through His mortality the dominion of death also, and through His death He will kill our death. And because He is indestructible He will remain (undestroyed) through His indestructibility. The destruction is of concern to us who are the corruptible ones. And on account of the fact that He is not subject to suffering and is above suffering, He voided and destroyed the sufferings by means of His non-suffering. His death became death to our death, and His suffering became a suffering to our sufferings. And because He descended in His own will among the destructible ones, it was not possible for destruction to reach Him. For if He had become a mortal from a mortal, He would have died on his own; then He would not have been able to give life to the others. The sufferings which He endured at the hands of the crucifiers upon Himself |223b| would have been assessed and settled at Him.

And, if He were susceptible to suffering in His nature, it would not have been possible that, as One who was susceptible to suffering, He would assist the suffering-ones through His suffering, nor would He bring exemption from suffering to the sufferers through His susceptibility to suffering. And then it would not have been salvation of the one who in his nature would be subject to destruction, on account of the fact that He is free from destruction. But even if this happened to Him, on account of the fact that He himself is Grace, He would have been healed, whereas this would not have brought any benefit to the others.

Now then, the mystery is great, the love profound, and the redemption ineffable. The Immortal One died for the sake of the mortal ones. Through

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His death He saved them from the mortal nature, and the non-suffering one suffered for the sake of the suffering ones. Through His suffering, He granted impassibility to the suffering ones. The Indestructible one came down to the level of the destructible ones, and because of the fact that He cannot be destroyed, He brought them to the state of non-destructibility.

Now the Nestorians and all the heretics have not perceived these mysteries, and they have not derived this sense of life. Because of this, each one of them held a side of the Scriptures which was agreeable to him and each one of them explained as he wished the Scriptures according to his will and not according to the mouth of God. Nestorius thought of Him as a man who dwelt in Him, that is, God the Word. Eutyches, as he complied with the doctrine of Mani and of Valentinus, thought of Him in terms of hallucinations and illusions considering the mystery of the humanization of God the Word, and thus he insulted our Savior. Arius and Eunomius the blasphemers thought of Him as the son of the Creator and of a created woman. They abased the hypostasis of the spirit from the nature of the Godhead. When he tried to show that our Lord was vain and not perfect, Apollinaris blasphemed rashly and said that God the Word was embodied within the mind and the soul. Macedonius ventured iniquitously when he said that the Holy Spirit was utterly not within the nature of the Godhead. Paul of Samosata, Diodore, Theodore, Nestorius, Ibas, Theodoret, the Council of Chalcedon and the *Tome* of Leo all drank from the one and the same pit of stinking filth.

Albeit each of them spoke deceitfully and wrote in blasphemy against the truth, they preach a quaternity against the Trinity and they say two sons instead of one. One from the Father and the other from |224[a]| the Virgin; one, they say, who was born of the Father and another from the Virgin; one, they say, from Heaven, and one from Earth; and one spiritual and one physical, and one dweller and one who is dwelled in, and one that puts on a

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body, and one who was put on. And one hidden, the other revealed; and one worshipper, the other worshipped, one the Word of the Father, the other a Jesus to whom the Virgin gave birth. And they divide the Christ into this and that. They cut the only-begotten into the one and the other. And they attribute the miracles to the God and the Passion to the human; and they call the one from the Virgin passible, and the one from the Godhead they name the non-suffering one.

To one they attribute necessities, the other they call "full of the necessities." One, they say, is born from the Father, and the other was created a son of Mary. And they arrange Him who is one and non-transformable into two figures and into two natures which are known also as hypostases. They set into groups the One who utterly cannot accept any reckoning.

Briefly, everything of dishonor and of lowliness which they attributed to Him from His Humanity, be it the fact that He was born of the Virgin, be it the swaddling-clothes of his birth, be it the manger in the cavern, the circumcision of the seventh day, the sacrifice of the young doves, his growth little by little, the baptism by the hands of John, the temptation from the Devil, the fact that He slept in the boat, that He was exhausted from the toil on the road, and the quotation "My Father is greater than I"[13] and also that "about the hour no one knows not even the Son,"[14] and that He suffered, and that He died, and was put in a grave, all of these. Because He was born from the Virgin Mary, these are quoted. These (the following) are the other side: as is appropriate to God. Concerning the One from the Father, they quote these: that when He was born, He was adored by the angels, and He was worshipped by the shepherds and offerings were presented to Him by the Magi, and the quotation that "I am in need of being baptized by you,"[15] and that the angels ministered to Him, and that He turned water into wine at Cana in Galilee, and the quotation "I and the Father are one,"[16] and that "He who sees me, sees the Father"[17] and that

[13] Jn 14.28.
[14] Mt 24.36.
[15] Mt 3.14.
[16] Jn 10.30.
[17] Jn 14.9.

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He walked on water at Galilee, and that He filled the multitudes with five loaves of bread in the desert, and that He revived three dead people, the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow, and Lazarus four days after his entombment. All of the things which resemble these, they attribute to the One from the Father. And when the heretics desire to magnify the One from the Father and to belittle the One from the Virgin, they happen to glorify the One from the Virgin as written in the Holy Scripture.

For this was written concerning Him: He will be wrapped |224b| in swaddling-clothes and be put in a manger. Concerning Him, it is written that the angels say "He is Christ the Lord." And that it was written that He slept on the boat; the Scripture tells that He stood up and rebuked winds and stilled the storms. Where was it written that the One from Mary satisfied the hunger of multitudes? It is written that He broke and blessed the bread and gave it to the disciples so that they distributed it to the multitude. He, about whom it was written that he walked on water, was shown to be Jesus by the account of the Scripture. That is, at the fourth watch of the night, the disciples saw Jesus as He walked on water. And again when the daughter of Jairus was raised, it was written that Jesus had revived her. And when the son of the widow came back to life, it was written that Jesus had raised him. And when Lazarus walked out of his tomb after four days of burial, it was written that Jesus had raised him. And when the eyes of the blind were opened, the spittle of Jesus had opened them; and when He was hung up on the cross, and after He had cried in a voice and surrendered His soul, it is written that signs occurred. These were that the earth shook, rocks were rent, the veil (of the Temple) was torn, and the bodies of the holy ones rose. Look, all these signs were from the voice of the one who was hanging on the cross. Can they now be separated and divided into the miracles for the Son of man and the small (deeds) of God? How then is it not so, brothers? Those who separate the terms which are placed in the Scriptures (by saying) "Two Natures," those who suppose

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these, do not know that they are also preaching two sons.

Which prudent person is it who, after hearing the blasphemies of these people, would not call them worshippers of idols? And I say worshippers of idols akin to Jews. Because they put Him who was born from the Virgin, the Son of Man, as a simple person like one of us, who in grace alone was worthy of being taken as the son but afterwards they offer worship to Him as to God. When He is considered by them as a simple human, they are Jews, then. Because they say "We crucified a simple human like one of us and not the Lord God who had become a man" – which the Church asserts.

And I have demonstrated these two things as well as those which he had committed to writing when I brought the testimonies from their writings. For Nestorius says in one of his compositions: "He, the one from Mary, is the Son through grace. He, the one from the Father, through nature." And this he said: "The Jews will not boast that they crucified Him as God. For they crucified a simple man." Lo, therefore, justly they are called |225[a]| heathens and worshippers of idols and appropriately they are named Jews and crucifiers. They will follow then the truth.

And lo, previously we demonstrated to them that the Scriptures preach one Son, and (they preach) that high and low things, and divine and human things, and the miracles and the suffering are of the Only-begotten One. High things, because He is from high in His nature and is from that high and sublime origin. And divine because He is God. And human things, on account of the fact that He became human, and miracles because they are proper to His nature. The suffering, then, because although He was not liable to suffering, He was tried by sufferings. And then John the Evangelist, Son of Zebedee, the one who was named by the Word "Son of Thunder" and was called through the Spirit "Son of Thunder."[18] He called him a partaker in the senses of the Godhead. Because He exalted and

[18] Mk 3.17.

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honored him, on account of his purity, among his fellow disciples.

And he leaned on His lap, and He revealed to him all the secret things that will happen. And he approached a great, high, and sublime revelation, in order to attain a sense of the inconceivable mysteries of the Godhead. And who from among the faithful was to perceive these great and heavenly plans? He was granted a gift so that he could freely speak about them as much as he could. They called him Son of Thunder because he spoke of divine things and expounded the heavenly things in a miraculous way. He was witness to our truth. In everything that he wrote, he demonstrated concerning Christ that He is One and not two.

This holy man wrote to us in his Gospel "God the Word, who became flesh and was born of the Holy Virgin." He would say and speak beautifully what he preached; the Word which was uncovered is proper to the senses, and then comes out of the mouth. See what he said: "In the beginning there was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was with the Word,[19] and the Word became flesh and lived among us."[20] And when he wished to demonstrate that He appeared not in the nature of His essence but in that in which He became human, he said: "Nobody from everlasting time has ever seen God. God the only Son was the one in the bosom of the Father,"[21] he said, because He was the God the Spirit and infinite and direct.

And the heaven and earth, heights and depths were filled by Him. Since everlasting time, He was not visible to Moses, nor to Elijah nor to Ezekiel nor to Micah nor to Amos; not because He was jealous of their seeing His mercy, but because the nature of (their) deeds was not a match to see God, through the eyes of the flesh in His essence. Because of this, God came out of |225[b]| His hiding in His hypostasis, and was revealed in the flesh upon the generations of mortals. And He softened for the witnesses His arrival among men and restrained the intensity of His glory

[19] Jn 1.1.
[20] Jn 1.14.
[21] Jn 1.18.

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within the sight of His incarnation. And He became a sun to be possibly perceived by the eyes and He was measured as a sea of light among peoples. And when many people raised considerations about Him, of whether He was indeed the only great God, who is comprehended, like us, through the eyes of the flesh, they took John to say so addressing this kind of consideration: "God was not revealed to you in His being. As a matter of the fact that He became human, you happened to see Him. Until then you could not see Him."[22] Neither you, nor the angels of heaven, have therefore seen (Him), my brothers, because the holy man preached "one" at the beginning of his gospel. And he attributed what He is and He was to the one son, because "since time immemorial man has not seen Him, and He was the only begotten God who it was that was seen in the flesh,"[23] he said.

And also John, the son of Zachariah, His preacher, preached this concerning Him: "Lo, after me comes a man whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. That is, He is coming afterwards, but He is before me, because He is superior to me."[24] If after him, how (is He) before him? If before him, how come after him? "After me," that is, in the birth of the flesh, the worldly birth-order. "Before me," then, in the birth from the Essence. "After me" because He became human. "Before me" because He is God. For He who comes from above is above everything. And he who is from earth, is from earth. And He who is from Heaven is above everything. John said these, when he demonstrated that the Son of God is from above. And John is from below, John from earth, and Christ is from Heaven. John is earthly, and Christ is spiritual. John is the voice[25] and Christ is the Word[26], and is the only begotten Son of the Essence. And He formed within the Virgin. The Father gave His only begotten Son for the sake of the salvation of the world, and, it is not that He gave one for death and preserved another one alive. That is, God loved the world so much as to give His only begotten Son for its sake.[27]

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[22] Possibly relying on Jn 1.14 and Jn 1.18.
[23] See Jn 1.18.
[24] Jn 1.15.
[25] Mk 1.3; Isa 40.3.
[26] Jn 1.14.
[27] Jn 3.16.

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And again Paul the divine and the great teacher of the gentiles also related luminously, which John had committed to writing: "When we were among the enemies, God became reconciled with us through the death of His Son."[28] And also concerning the matter that the Son –God forbid– may not be God. But for the sake of us, He surrendered Him to death. Also on this Paul says that God was reconciled with us through the death of His Son, and He delivered Him for our sake. Concerning Him Paul wrote in the letter |226[a]| to the Galatians: "God sent His Son and He became from a woman and He was under the Law in order to redeem us who are subject to being under the Law"[29] through His death. As you know, brothers, that all of the Scriptures preach one Son, and the Gospel-writers, the apostles, the miracles and the passion narrate one Son. Avoid the communion of the heretics; they separate the Christ into natures and hypostases and forms. And stay within this revered doctrine of the Holy Church, which has from time immemorial not accepted those souls to dwell in it who are like the camels which chew the cud, and whose hoofs are not cloven. And it has not been subjected to learn from the peacock and the ostrich a confused doctrine, because he who divides Christ after the union into two natures, resembles the camel which is clean in its one half and unclean in its other half and (so) all of it is far from purity,[30] he who attributes the miracles to the one and the passion and the death to the other is similar to the ostrich, which has uncloven hooves but which chew the cud and is rejected because of the hoofs which are uncloven.[31]

And the Holy Scripture commands them not only because they are not to be eaten, but in order to give through them an argument clearly; so that one would not become the one who associates the believers and the unbelievers; so that again falsehood would not mingle with truth and truth would not associate with untruth. Imitate then the pure stags, which chew

[28] Rom 5.10.

[29] Gal 4.4–5.

[30] Lev 11.4.

[31] Lev 11.16, only stating, however, that the ostrich shall not be eaten, not because it has uncloven hoofs.

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the cud and have divided hoofs, and imitate the deer, which are swift in their seeing, which also were put aside by God through the spirit that they became things which may be eaten. And also remain the lambs which you are from among which the sacrifice was offered upon the holy altar.

The moment you internally become believers, preach externally in front of everyone. And faith has been among you, on the inside and on the outside, like that gold with which the Ark of the Tabernacle was overlaid inside and outside,[32] and the faith will be kept among you without any harm or augmentation, after the model proper to the pearl which would not accept any addition or omission. Preserve this plain faith of yours, which you have learnt from the holy ones at Nicaea, to that no hated attrition from the heretics should enter, which is a sickness of faith.

Show zeal with all your force not only to believe correctly, but also to curse the impious Council of Chalcedon, the abominable *Tome* of the impious Leo, and the rejected Eutyches. And you already know that no one may approach the perfection of the stature of Christ, apart from reciting the faith, if he does not fight against His enemies |226b|. (Those) who are His enemies at present are, therefore, now known. I am talking about the ones who assiduously introduce the new heresy of worshipping the man, those that set up the Council of Chalcedon and the *Tome* of Leo. Holy ones, I have written these things to you not because I am instituting a new faith while teaching innovations, but to ask you to stand in all firmness and to be good models for everyone with the manner of living as well as in faith, because it is proper that I should do like the word of the Holy Scripture (says). Like a measure which was given by God, I will advise the members

[32] Ex 25.11.

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who are in Christ, and I will instruct them to fight together in the battle against the enemies of the truth.

I have written not with a view to teach but with a view to ask you to remain great and sublime on account of your covenant and that you may also remain the first ones in this zeal for the sake of the faith and I ask from you that you pray for me.

The letter of the venerable and holy John, bishop of Tella, has ended.

Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and in eternity for ever and ever. Amen.

May everyone who reads (this) pray for Abraham, the deacon of Beth Ṣūrāyā, who wrote (this).

This book is …

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APPENDIX: AN ADDITIONAL CANON BY JOHN OF TELLA

The canon edited and translated here can be found in a tenth century manuscript from the British Museum Add. 14493, fols. 152[a]-152[b].[1] François Nau has translated it into French, but it has not been edited yet.[2] Furthermore, Arthur Vööbus has shortly introduced the content of the canon in a footnote in his *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*.[3]

In this canon, John rules against the misappropriation of donations given to martyr shrines by the clergy who administered these shrines. From John's text it seems that the clergy considered it their right to keep part of the donations for themselves. John, however, reminds them that this is uncanonical, and the donations belong to the shrine and cannot be regarded as payment to finance the clerics. The so-called Kaper Koraon treasure and other treasuries from the Syrian countryside between Antioch and Apamea, for example, show that donations even to village churches could be considerable: high quality silver objects have been donated to churches here within a hundred years during the sixth and seventh centuries.[4] Also two surviving inventories of village churches in Egypt and Numidia demonstrate that probably most ordinary churches had a treasure.[5] Therefore, martyr shrines to which not only locals but many pilgrims or people in need of divine aid donated gifts, were even more likely to be well endowed with

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[1] William Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol.1, London: Gilbert and Rivington 1870, 221.

[2] Nau, *Les Canons et les Résolutions Canoniques,* 26f.

[3] Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen* Vol. 1, A, 161 n. 63.

4 Marlia Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures*, Baltimore, Maryland: The Walters Art Gallery 1986; for a critical review of Mango's conclusions see Arne Effenberger, "Bemerkungen zum 'Kaper-Koraon-Schatz'", in *Tesserae. Festschrift für Josef Engemann*, JbAC Supplement 18, Münster/Westf.: Aschendorff 1991, 241–277.

[5] Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures*, 263.

expensive artefacts.[6] John's canon rules unambiguously that those gifts became the property of the institution to which they were donated.

[6] A short sketch on Syrian piety is given by Cyril Mango, "Aspects of Syrian Piety", in Susan A. Boyd and Marlia Mundell Mango, *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks 1992, 99-105. See also the other contributions to this volume.

[A CANON OF JOHN, BISHOP OF TELLA]

|152[a]| We have heard that there are people who keep houses of martyrs, to which are offered by the faithful vows, tithes, gifts of vessels, gold and silver and the |152[b]| other remaining things with which it is customary for the pious people to honor the saints. Those who are in charge of the places take these things also for themselves and they spent them for their (own) households. It is forgotten by them – even by the person who has made the vow – that the law has commanded that in no way the vow will have been fulfilled (when handled so). And again as Solomon the Wise admonishes when he says: "It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow but not fulfill it,"[1] and David: "Vow and fulfill for the Lord your God."[2]

And therefore if these were ordered by the Holy Scriptures, and they signify that those who do not fulfill (them) are sinners, how much more for the mediators of God and of the saints and of the faithful, is it proper that they should prove/demonstrate their mediation to be upright and free from sin, and they should not touch those things. We order them that if the things that are offered are too much, as long as they do not diminish anything from the glory of the saints and from everything which is necessary for the building at that location, they should satisfy from these things also the necessity of the sick and of the afflicted who visit the priestly houses of the martyrs as for a prayer and in order to receive help. And also their own necessity should be satisfied from these things. The holy vessels, if they are more than what is required at the place, they should offer up. They should share these things also with the churches in need.

[1] Eccl 5.5.
[2] Ps 76.11.

|152a| ܐܡܪܝܢ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ. ܘܐܝܟ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ. |152b| ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ ܠܗ.

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